

FANTASY



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FANTASY *A Literary Quarterly*

WITH AN EMPHASIS ON POETRY

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CONTENTS

LINES FOR THE NIGHT—PRIZE POEM.....	Edith Mirick	3
LEAF FROM A BOOK.....	Harold Vinal	4
MUSIC OF THE CITIES.....	Edgar Lee Masters	5
COQUETTE	Elias Lieberman	6
FOR A POSSIBLE POEM ON A CITY.....	Haniel Long	7
THE SIMPLE PRAYER.....	Charles Hudeburg	10
THE DOOR.....	J. Redwood Anderson	11
WINTER BREATH	Edward Weismiller	12
"QUANDOCUMQUE IGITUR NOSTROS MORS CLAUDET OCELLOS"	James Laughlin IV	12
TO MY SON: FOR HIS INTEGRITY.....	Winfield Townley Scott	13
HERE IS YOUR FACE.....	George Abbe	13
ADVICE TO BE CAST TO THE WIND.....	Mabel Posegate	14
RITUAL	Joseph Upper	14
THERE ARE NO MORE TOMORROWS—A STORY.....	Peter Neagoe	15
TO A GIRL WATCHING VEGA.....	Ralph Friedrich	17
PORTRAIT OF MADNESS.....	Sarah Litsey	18
THE SINGER.....	Richard Leon Spain	18
NUPTIAL VOYAGE (After Andre Spire).....	Clark Mills	19
NOT WITHOUT TEARS.....	Kathryn Winslow	20
EVEN NOW IN 1936.....	Evan Lodge	21
"THE KID WAS GREEN".....	Mary N. S. Whiteley	22
MIDGES	Edwin Carlile Litsey	22
THE MYTH OF ONLY ONE TRUE SONNET FORM—AN ESSAY	Robin Lampson	23
HORSE CREEK VALLEY.....	LeGarde S. Doughty	26
I SAY, JOHN SMITH.....	Kathleen Sutton	29
AMERICAN NOCTURNE	S. Raiziss	31
KANSAS	Glen Baker	32
THE STEP DAUGHTER.....	Travis Tuck Jordan	33
WALL STREET PRAYER.....	Alfred Morang	34
NARCISSUS—A STORY.....	Rosamond Peirce	35
TRUNCATIONS	S. D. M.	40
REVIEWS	S. D. M.	43

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Arthur Davison Ficke was our very agreeable judge in the current contest of poems on the theme of "Night". Born in 1883, in Davenport, Iowa, his first book was published in 1907. He is an authority on Japanese Prints, having written books on them, in addition to his books of poetry. Today the total of his published works is fifteen, with the fifteenth, *The Secret, and Other Poems*, just leaving the Doubleday, Doran presses. "My fifty-three years," he writes, "have been crowded with spiritual adventures, but there have been few external events worth noting." The accomplishments of his poetry have been external event enough for us.

Mr. Ficke commends the prize-winning poem as a particularly well-conceived and well-expressed poem. It faces this page, and is by Mrs. Edith Mirick, of Washington, D. C. Readers will recall her excellent magazine, *Star-Dust*, which was forced along the way of noble failures several years ago.

The contest theme for the next issue will be the colored race. An exposition of their philosophy, a humanitarian approach to their difficulties, or any other treatment is entirely welcome. We suggest as a title simply "The Negro". Entries to be eligible must be in by October 1st, and may run to thirty-five lines; the prize remains the same. Realizing that little time is being given in preparation for this contest, we ask contestants to enter their poems as early as possible, since we hope to bring FANTASY back to its original publication schedule without doubling on any issues.

Lines for the Night

Edith Mirick

Oh, splendid and most reasonable Mind
That watches in dismay the lowering arc
Of noon's brief sun: I tell you that the dark
Is wiser than the day is, and more kind.
The twilight gives her certain pledge for this:
See how across the sunset's burnished lane
The gilded sheep flock toward their fold again;
The robin, with her little braveries
Of song gone mute, has fluttered to the bough;
The arrowed swallow, winging down, retrieves
Her moulded cradle underneath the eaves;
And, through the fragrant meadow grass, the cow
Goes to the haven of the pasture bars.
Night is the coming home of each quick thing.
The plowman, weary from his travailing,
Moves toward the cottage where, like earth-blown stars,
The evening lamps mark paths across the gloom,
And love seeks love where rosy hearth-logs blaze,
Opening the door from dusky shadowed ways
Into the aura of a shining room.
I am the Heart that speaks. I tell you night
Is kinder than the day, a surer friend.
Evening is but a prelude to portend
The quiet coming of a further light,
A pause when wings are folded, and all men
Waiting the dawn, may find their dream again.

LEAF FROM A BOOK

HAROLD VINAL

That irresponsible and fatal season,
Dora contemplative beside the window.

The book is in her hands. The Spring caresses
Her brow, her hair, the arches of her shoulders.
Day dies. The curtain of the afternoon
Falls, thumb'd by the slow darkness. Curiously,
She leans and listens. (Tumult of the birds,
Intent on the small business of the day.)

So April rises to the throbbing center
That is her being. Like an unsealed fountain
She waits for light. The book upon her lap
Lies open to her gaze. She looks and reads:
Now is the season of fecundity.
Thus every word she reads is rich with spring.

Dora is lovely if one knew her body,
Her face is wrong like a half-moulded vase
Upon a perfect pedestal. She sighs.
Her anguished eyes detect the words again:
Now is the season of fecundity.

Suspended in a dream of hope she sits,
Waiting for nothing, waiting for everything.
Outside, the twitter swells into a song.

O Coveter of delight. The words are full
Of tears and agony. Her heart expands
Its tempo and goes slack. The evening veils
The trailing cypress and the ilex trees.
Starlight betrays the words upon the page:
Death is a country where the limbs have rest.

The book slides to the floor and Dora rises,
Her movements are the movements of a dancer.
The room beyond, the bed, the chair, the mirror,
All draw her forward and the row of bottles
Upon the shelf. She reaches. It is done!

O Coveter of delight. She lies among
Her broken dreams, a dancer without music,
A dancer staring at an empty stage.
The hand, un-kissed, falls from the coverlet,
The wan hand falls at last, is caught and held
And kissed by the slow passion of a stranger.

MUSIC OF THE CITIES

EDGAR LEE MASTERS

Are echoes of music in chorus
In the stratospheres
Preserved of cities before us
Five thousand years;
Sent up from Thebes and Babylon,
From Baghdad's magic,
From Carthage ruined and gone,
From Uxmal the tragic?

Are the lights of those cities extinct
In every sky,
And strings and voices linked
Vanished on high?
Or do they sound forever,
As the dulcimers
Moaned by the Tigris River
To yearning verse?

And what of Alexandria,
And the gleam of Pharos,
When many an amorous aria
Sang joy or loss?
When Cleopatra, grieving
For Antony, sailed
The Nile and fed bereaving
With harps that wailed?

Is there somewhere recording,
A tuning-fork
To save the vibrate chording
That speaks New York,
Mingled with San Francisco,
Los Angeles,
Chicago, where they risk so
The passionate keys?

From London, too, ascending,
From Leningrad;
From Paris, for joy unending,
For life too mad;
From Tokio, from Peiping,
Mecca, Bombay,
Where heavy hearts are wiping
Their tears away,

Music of the Cities — continued

With instruments and dancing,
With orchestras,
Thereby to soothe mischancing,
And love that strays?
What becomes of the voices
That fill the nights
With music and with noises,
What of the lights?

Must all this life so thirsting,
This glowing mass
Fade like a comet bursting,
Just glow and pass;
And leave but recollection
In earth below,
Like the cities that met subjection
In the long ago?

Must longing, aspiration,
Must souls afire
Be just the suspiration
Of love's desire?
A moment's illumination
From whirling dust,
Be then annihilation
In a holocaust?

COQUETTE

ELIAS LIEBERMAN

Woman, caprice-impelled to try the fates,
Do not expect to know what friendship means;
At best for you there is the clang of gates,
Farewells, dry tears and twilight scenes.
Eyes inward turned, you feed on vanity
And while you feast crave other banquet halls;
Head bowed, you yield abject idolatry
To your own mirrors hung on countless walls.

Do not believe a gracious quirk for hire
Discounts the utter dark that is your heart;
Your smile lacks aught of either light or fire;
It finds its mark like any poison dart.
But know there waits for you a lonely day
No powder puff can hope to peck away.

FOR A POSSIBLE POEM ON A CITY

HANIEL LONG

Prologue

Dawn was topaz over Rome's red-brick
aqueducts and Florence's snow-white
bridges and the timbered gables of Frankfort.

To-day white plumes of steam are waving,
and the smoke of the dead coal fields
streams on the breeze.

The laws of life must be for all ages,
not for any one age. Sometimes a tree grows
and sometimes it dies. Sometimes a balance of forces
maintains itself, sometimes it goes to pieces.

To learn those mysterious laws—
studying them where they are most alive,
in human beings—
what people said and did
in the spasm of the emergencies—
the exact words,
the exact deeds too, could I but see them.

Ripples and lustres aught else
the fiery similitude of living things?

And never to say, I will listen to words
only if they seem to me fine words
(yet not to ignore fine words)—
to give the Stygian rivers and the Golcondas
equal place—to examine all dreams
(yet not to forget they are dreams)
to see for myself what people are like,
to watch the shudder of living,
to listen to all words out of the shudder.

To forget what appears praiseworthy or blameworthy,
what appears health-giving or death-dealing,
passing beyond all that.

Passing beyond all that to firm ground,
fighting through the jungles of fantasy
to the granite cliffs.

For a Possible Poem on a City — continued

Epilogue

These people, owned by the cosmos even as I am,
owned by recurrence, in themselves recurrence,
as ocean knows the winds, too well I know them.
Bodies and minds and each with its attraction
and its repulsion, under gravity:
and each of us an equilibrium
maintained precariously; and all together
an equilibrium maintained precariously,
when feelings and ideas bring force to bear
upon the balancing thing. Gardens of blood
where flowers turn to slaughter and are slaughtered:
prairies of thought and feeling: intricate
psychical growths and tangles: jungles of nerves:
since I am such myself, too well I know them.

Or is the Public Thing a quickened structure,
anatomy of leaves and blood attending
the moon, knowing spring first and at last winter?
Does what we all compose, like each of us,
grow old: branches and twigs, and leaf and flower,
are we somehow a Tree? Is it thus we web
each other, skeining and meshing, skein'd and mesh'd
in a plexus within membranes, a great knot
of smaller knots, and flake and film outside?

So, is it balanced or organic life?
So, is our living structured for destruction
or for our poise? Must we, the Public Thing,
be young, grow old, and die; or do we die
then only when our equipoise is lost
and cannot be regained: when this no longer
is tantamount to that: when you and I,
too used, no longer are resolvable
into another you and I?

Who knows?

Not you, not I; nobody knows. Our life
is mystery always: both a living organ
and a physical, dynamic balance, too:
and either way, who can find purpose in it?
So long as it can, a balance balances
itself: so long as it can, an organ lives:
the way the mind sums up, this sums it up:
Do we progress? How can a plant progress,
how can a balance?

Thus, in extremis, thought
Comes to an end. But man escapes from thought,
and on himself exerts, in meditation,
in attraction past of the worlds that thought erects:
the shy dark mystery of him remains
which for its purposes produced the mind,
and which, through human heart and eyes and hands,
thought may be always touching: the microcosm
in which the psyche of the world may nest,
in which the certainty may front the doubt
and life see past its death.

Unveil the body:
witness the rhythmic reproductive form
which knows the throe of the circle and belongs
to the circle, not to you nor me: which blossoms
from undulation, is the embryo
of time.

Unveil the mind: see the exact
brave Prince who charts the courses of the sea,
and adds to a vibration what can know
vibration never.

Heart that centres us
feels awe at the mind, and sweetness at the body:
mind may lead heart astray, or body may:
but in the end the secret centering heart
and the shy dark mystery it leads to, stays;
and thought, its lightnings spent, acknowledges
the power beyond it: power that saves a man
from thinking too long, too wrongly, of an event
called Homestead, or a series of events
which are all like Homestead and called history,
the history of Pittsburgh, or of Man,
going back to Man's beginning: in which shadows
contend, and branches stir their twigs to frenzy,
beasts of the field betray and rend each other,
birds of the air grow angry with their wings.
Even then, when wild and naked Mind comes crying
out of the tombs and mountains that torment it,
this power appears, and takes Mind like a mother,
murmuring again some tale that children know
of a pearl of great price which is worth one's all,
or a Bridegroom coming to a bridal feast.

THE SIMPLE PRAYER

CHARLES HUDEBURG

The entrance so easy to the end of days
the simple prayer cool by the open
mouth of the bed the blinds already swung
to the final promise night to the promise
of another day and another life
apart segmented not linked in a chain
with stop at the end and no return

The simple prayer unlearned coolworded
as the child's lips moistened already
with the little drool of sleep

The simple
prayer said and lost in the long maze the long
long ways the forgotten names the hidden voices
the sad eyes gone glazed and the color gone
from them

The simple prayer

lost with sighs
with expirations of all yesterdays
with visas tickets checks coins and introductions
with lost smiles and lost shudders after pain

with hands forgotten and hands changed
and lost the nails new or never new
the bones regrown or not grown lost in ground

with name and things with sweat and breath with blood . . .

The limbs are too long grown and stranger to
the older easy ways and hand is stranger
to the hand: now blank and bland the infant heart
wakens and wishes for its dream apart

the simple prayer

THE DOOR

J. REDWOOD ANDERSON

Night on the moor and wind;
along the horizons, thunder; now and then,
flashes of sight:
the moor, the road, the thinned
cloud-auras, and the blackened night.

I was alone upon the moor
and did not know where the road went:
lost, till I seemed to be
a blown leaf at the mercy of the storm,
atom of fragile force and nearly spent—
and round me the unshaped element
of wind.

Thunder and wind—
and like a gong
thunder and wind
dinned
hour-long
my impotence into me.

Suddenly,
an oblong clear and warm
cut in cold gloom—a door,
lamplight, the pleasant voice of men.

My soul came back out of the infinite
unfriendly solitudes—Humanity
hailed me its own.

Then to the darkness round me and above
I flung that sign of man and of man's love,
a challenge—and passed on
strong once again because of it.

WINTER BREATH

EDWARD WEISMILLER

A man will need
Before his death
A little anger
In his breath,

A little fire
Through his day,
Lest what he sing
And what he say

Be wholly like,
And made to bear
The self-same color
In the air,

And even love
Be swiftly thinned
To frosty silence
On the wind.

"Quandocumque Igitur Nostros Mors Claudet Ocellos"

JAMES LAUGHLIN IV

Flutter and slowly fall
so be content
The withered leaf is all
Spring's promise meant

Nor tremble when cold
waters the blood
For this we were told
at the tide's flood

(At greenest noon
most surely know
the sunfire soon
must embral glow)

Flutter and softly sink
await snowpeace
Yet never think
this is release

Tilling this sea
each ship leaves trace
eternally
though not in space.

TO MY SON: FOR HIS INTEGRITY

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT

If I could will you this stone
Carried always in my hand,
For you to carry it on,
It were better than house and land
And harder to keep, my son.

And you may learn it weighs
Both less and more than gold,
That jealous, asking days
Offer much else to hold—
Even their bread and praise.

A small, long load on the wrist
Where the blood must flow thin,
It will ache, burn, twist.
But I got it from a man
Had it sixty years in his fist.

Though nothing at last foils
Your grave and my lost grave,
This stone alone despoils
Much bitterness I have,
And night fails, rain recoils
Even while you grieve.

HERE IS YOUR FACE

GEORGE ABBE

Here is your face, and here the mouth that speaks,
And dusk has overtaken us at last.
Strange, lovely one, what every mortal seeks
Is given us: up steep of voiceless past
Our lives have come to mingle in the far,
Clean deepening of destined night. And yet,
Though we may see and speak beneath a star,
We know not. Like the waiting echo set
In shells we sound the meaningless; pain
And emptiness alone are in our hands,
And what we see and say will ever wane
Like ocean brightness over darkened sands.
Here is your face, the mouth that here proclaims
Unknown with me, the namelessness of names.

ADVICE TO BE CAST TO THE WIND

MABEL POSEGATE

Avoid love's bright temptation
That callow youth will choose.
Erect a stalwart bastion,
Unflinchingly refuse

To give your heart away
No matter if a prince
Prostrate himself and pray,
Permit no evidence

That his passion is requited.
Fix barbs upon your wire,
Declare he is not fated
To be your children's sire.

Though each taut nerve and sinew
Rebel to see him go,
Stifle the cry within you,
Deny him even so.

Love is a braggart fellow,
A wastrel and a cheat,
Unfit to share your pillow
And eat your meat.

RITUAL

JOSEPH UPPER

As when the setting sun with solemn mien
Pronounces benediction on the sea,
And men who have so many sunsets seen
Address their thoughts to beauty prayerfully,
So shall I sing when all my songs are ended,
Or pray, whose last prayer long ago was said,
Turning a backward glance to something splendid,
Saying a laggard grace for vanished bread.
And high upon the altar of my dreaming
Your beauty shall be worshipped from afar,
Like some rare gem in matchless lustre gleaming,
Like the cold radiance of a burning star,
To make of nights you would not let me share
A ritual of poetry and prayer.

There Are No More Tomorrows

by Peter Neagoe

Mr. Neagoe started writing at the age of seventeen in his native Roumania, and was the first man to translate Gorki into that language. His American reputation was first established as a writer of short stories. A first novel, Easter Sun, was published in 1933, and a collection of short stories, Winning a Wife, followed last year. This collection included those first appearing in Storm, a volume banned from the United States for two years and released along with Ulysses. His latest novel, There Is My Heart, appeared this year.

THE man came, in the wind, livid from the cold. The woman met him in front of the shack. "Her eyes, my God", the man said to himself, because the woman's eyes came to him, as two questioning messengers, ahead of her. They came to meet him before he was aware of her person, her whole person, a dried shrivelling woman shrinking in size, daily shrinking. As the woman's body was emptied of life, her eyes, as if drawing that life into themselves, became animated with a dry, cold light. "No," the man said to the eyes, the *no* of despair, of futility. The eyes sucked his answer into their cold light unblinking. But as he was near her now, the man saw the woman's hands claw the rags on her body. They remained, her fingers, cramped in tight clutching, in bloodless immobility.

She spoke to him, as he might have known she would, with that rasping voice of hers, the voice of her desiccated bones. She said: "Tonight you must do it". She

said the words with her mouth barely open, her lips taut over yellow, decayed teeth. They entered the shack. Inside it was night already, dark and cold. A small fire was dying in the rusty, cracked, doorless stove. The man raked together dried leaves and twigs on the clay floor, with his hands, and threw them in the stove. The flames lighted up the small enclosure. The man trailed his eyes on the floor. From under a heap of rags near the wall, four pairs of children's eyes looked at him. No, was his answer to them also. The eyes of the children remained staring at him and he could not endure them. He jerked his head away.

"Tonight you must do it," he heard the woman say again. "But, but . . . maybe tomorrow" he mumbled. "Tonight you must do it," the woman repeated. "There are no tomorrows", she said. She turned to the heap of rags where the children lay. The four pairs of eyes quivered and closed, but under the lids they quailed. The man sat

There Are No More Tomorrows—continued

down on the box, his knees sharp bone-angles in front of him. He laid his hands on his knees and moved no more.

THE man is in his thirties, gaunt, raw-boned, big. The woman has no age in her, only the shrinkage from hunger. The wasting dryness of hunger. Motionless she stood near him, motionless and silent, as the spider dying from hunger.

The children stirred no more. The night advanced slowly, black, cold; the wind whined, hurling itself against the shack. The woman sat on the floor, near the man, unfeeling to the cold. He shivered now and again, but she did not stir.

Late in the night she got up, went close to where the children slept. Quietly she fed the fire with dried leaves and twigs. The red light quivered over the sleeping children.

The woman brought the ax to the man, where he sat on the box, now bent forward as one desecrating an object in front of him. She leaned the small, dull ax against his bent leg and put her hand on his shoulder. "Here it is. Take Johnny first. They'll never know. It don't hurt in sleep. Come!"

The man had no will in him any more. During the years when he had worked in the factory, his will was emptied out of him. It was a useless thing. It was worthless, so it was taken out of him. He did not know that he no longer had it, because he did his work well, paced to the movements of the machine, and in the three years without work, with no machine to guide his movements, he did what thousands, millions of other men were doing. He wandered about the country, from factory to factory, from city to city, in search of a job, the only substitute for will. The only means wherewith his worth could be measured. As millions of others, he

found no job. And now, he lost the sense of his worth, since his worth had not been gauged in so long a time.

But the woman, she had something for him. She had the purpose of his last act thought out for him. Fixed, compact, definite. A clear, decisive act. Since months, daily she put into him, out of her own being, drop by drop, with her life blood, the will required by him to fulfill his final act. Every night during the past two weeks she tried him out, she tried to measure his worth, with that only gauge she had, the words: "Tonight you will do it", put as a question and as a command to him. But until this night—he was not yet ready. Was he ready tonight?

He sat bent forward, as one scanning the deep of the earth in front of him. The small, dull ax stood propped against his leg. He sat there unmoving, silent. The woman, frail, sapless, dry as the twig on the floor, put her face close to his. Her eyes burned with the last fire in her. If she failed now, she would lose. She did not want to lose. To lose the only human spark in her, this ultimate drop of will. She had cried her last tears of weakness, of humiliation long ago. Long ago she had drained the last dregs of self-deception. "There are no more tomorrows", she said to herself during the endless black days and nights stagnant and rotted.

"Come John," the woman said, clutching his head. "Take Johnny first, they won't feel it, sleeping. It is quick. Then me, the last one. Then, when you get the rope around your neck, kick the box, swing forward."

The man was bending over the woman. She folded her arms, pressed them against her chest. "Now," she said, tightening her jaws. Her eyes held him. He felt them in

all his quivering sinews. "Now" the eyes cried to him. He lifted the ax, swung. She did not hear the crashing blow on her head as she had heard the four dull thuds, in the heap of rags. She did not see the ax shooting down on her head. What in that instant she saw was the fulfilment of her last request. She saw John swinging forward from the box, the noose snapping tight on his neck. "The last act", her mind shrieked, then it burst into shivers.

YES, I done it" John said. Then the sheriff pointed at the rope, dangling from the ceiling. "I

couldn't" John said. "God all mighty, sheriff, take me away from here. Take me away quick. Quick", groaned John. The groan heaved out of him, out of his innermost, and he fell into a heap.

"The woman lay there, stark, her eyes open," the sheriff told the coroner. "He was talking to me, then he looked at her, sort of sideways, like this and said '*quick*' and dropped". The coroner threw a rag over the dead woman's face. "God, what eyes," the sheriff said. "Is he dead too?" he asked. The coroner nodded. "Yes, he is dead," he said.

TO A GIRL WATCHING VEGA

RALPH FRIEDRICH

This, of all things about tonight, I shall remember:
Your eyes on Vega where she stood at zenith,
Your hands in mine, your face a poem of wonder.

I startled you, I know, for I remember
When I first looked on Vega, knowing her distinction.
You spoke no word, nor needed yet to utter
The briefest sound.

I loved you in that moment,
For we were kindred with the stars above us,
And loved them with the same enduring passion
That we shall keep for them night after night, forever.

Then, love, remember this: a star is far more faithful
Than any lover: make of it no symbol
For transient rapture. What, tonight, has held us
Enchanted will have vanished with the morning.

I keep no orbit: I am destined to no pathway,
Nor is my love, nor you. Unlike the planets,
Our ways are casual. Other days may darken
To find me on another hill, with other arms around me.
And other eyes than yours may look on Vega;
And other ears may hear me speak her glory,
Even as to you yet other lips will whisper
The names of stars, like sweet, undying music.

Be happy then, in that hour to remember
Another hour when Vega smiled upon us
And knew us for adorers of her beauty.

PORTRAIT OF MADNESS

SARAH LITSEY

Not upon earth is there so still a thing—
Not death, nor snow—
As she who sits alone in the grey dusk
With no light on her brow;

As she who sits alone in a lost day
And looks upon lost lands
While the slow tide of twilight without moan
Laps her forgetful hands.

No clamorous thought, no memory may assail
Her stillness now;
So fearful, so immaculate a peace
Blesses her mad, white brow.

THE SINGER

RICHARD LEON SPAIN

Against the mornings lift this cry—
Sing through the poplars on the sky
Too surfeited with song and mirth,
With winter wine and waking earth.

Lift up this cry for all brave things
That circle low on futile wings
Until their errant singing must
Lose itself in wind and dust.

Startle the reveling strong that shout
Of April-green and warmth without.
Bear to their laggard ears a song
Of hearts that face defeat too long.

Go to the hills and tell them there
Who spin their days of petaled air
That there are buds that never flower,
Denied the breadth of one light hour.

No peace can be allotted you,
Counting the dead hours and the rue;
Forspent with song, you yet must go
Singing the days of blight and woe—

Singing to men who do not count
The broken leaf, the dwindled fount—
The dawns that break on empty shores—
Words that die, unopened doors . . .

NUPTIAL VOYAGE

(AFTER ANDRE SPIRE)

CLARK MILLS

Saying to your young wife
Let us go back to my country.
My grandfathers rest there, and my grand-uncles,
under straight headstones.
They died before my birth,
in the days when the consecrated goats
were still permitted use of the cemetery
for pasturage, chafing long grass from the tombs.

Reading the square deep-cut letters
edged with black paint
which record their life.
Seeing how they were loved,
seeing how they were wept.

*They were kind to the poor,
without reproach in their transactions
and loyal in all things.
In the science of the Holy Word
their name was notoriously good;
adorned by these deeds and reputed fortunate
their souls take wing and rise embracing God.*

These people were not spectacular.
They week-ended without fail.
They drank water, ate bread, cheese and potatoes.
They weren't afraid of scoffers
at morning, in the markets.
as they folded their phylacteries.
They returned Fridays, late, before sunset.

They dressed for the Temple.
Then, placing their hands on their sons' heads:
God, treat them, they asked,
like Ephraim and Manasseh—
then, placing their hands on their daughters' heads:
God, give them equality with Sarah,
Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah.

Saying to your young wife
Let us go back to my country.
There we shall see the fir trees grow,
and the roots of them, which have spread
making the stone tombs of my ancestors crooked.

The crowd of loud cousins
milling at the station:
showing both of you

Nuptial Voyage — continued

their warehouses and factory,
showing both of you
their closets full of old crockery,
their polished oak buffets
gleaming with success.

And the French cook
at your cousins' house
cramming you during eight days
with sweet-breads, jellied chickens, pies,
lobsters, meat-balls, rabbits,
trout, crawfish, truffles, partridges
and smoked tongue.

Saying to your young wife
Let us go back to my country.
Reading the names of the grandfathers
cut with a dull chisel, under the double hand
of Cohen, under the ewer of the Levite.

NOT WITHOUT TEARS

KATHRYN WINSLOW

The hour is late
and the loveliness, cobwebs;
the night, too, is forsaken,
holding hungrily to eleven and twelve,
staring with insolent rage at the east.
I sit at a table
waiting for tomorrow to come,
horizon deep
out of the bay.
The walls of our room
I have closed down upon me
to shut in
the color of sails
and the color of sea
and the color of you
threaded through the emptiness on the floor.
The plates and cups are bare.
The cigarette stains are the colors of morning,
the coffee stains for tonight

and the clock continuously rehearsing
the uncolored sticks of words . . .

I never loved you after all . . .

dear Mistermorgan, Misterothschild, Misterzaharoff—
 in short, dear Mistermillionaire
 even now in 1936
 while the Wartoendwar is still fresh and Nye
 and the little guns vicker spittingly over the ghost of Afriopia
 we wish to thank you too much
 for arranging that lovely shambles for us in \$19141516171819.
 even now
 it is not too late to remember Tactical Maneuver CF\$:7&11
 making suddenly five gold stars in Elmstreet
 to remember vodka, vice
 and body lice
 and Misterstallings's picture of Georgepopodopolis
 holding his ripped belly shut with his hands:
 thank you really too, too much
 dear gentlemen
 for having our schoolboys learn that ripping little thrust
 that separates a man from his breakfast so neatly
 so quick and so sweetly.

and wasn't it a very sweet war
 dear Ymca?
 be brave, Dearboy
 have a chocolatebar and a fag and a Redcrossnurse and—
 well, be brave
 your mother will thank Misterwilson too sweetiy for the goldstar in the
 window
 Dearboy.

and as the sheep scratched over their fleas by night
 a flare shone 'round about them
 and a chorus of death's angels singing
glory! glory! glory!
glory to Vickers&krupp in the highest!

by the waters of Vinrouge-on-the-Marne
 there lay we down our carcasses for you
 dear Misterdupont, et al:
 is there no \$\$voice crying in the wilderness for peace?
 no place where man morgans or lamonteth not?
 where moth and dehaviland corrupt not?

for you all for you
 dear exquisite gentlemen
 you in whose hearts bitterness has never swelled as a deserted alley wench
 grows big with child
 you who have not known the hysteria of a madman laughing in a latrine
 or the stench of a rotting horse on a warm Juneday

Even Now in 1936 – continued

for you the shambles

the slogans

the New Strides in Science

the somewhat doubtful glory of:

Mademoiselle from Armentieres

she gave her all for the Rothschildfreres

and poor popeyed Popodopolis pinching his belly shut.

so thank you too much in advance for our next war

dear gentlemen—

I think you understand.

"THE KID WAS GREEN"

MARY N. S. WHITELEY

He tried to be one of them, but the kid was green

As a country mile. He tried so hard to please,

Offering food he'd stored beneath the trees

With a hopeful grin. Deliberately unclean

In muddy clothes, showing no sign of hunger,

He saw adventure more than life starved out.

His young laughter wedged the initial doubt

Of their own wisdom, filling them with anger.

But the kid followed. And when they saw the freight

He was young and green enough to try and show

He could leap like flame. They realized too late

He had jumped untaught, they could only gasp and go

With the guilty wheels, uncertain of their part

In life or in the stilling of his heart.

MIDGES

EDWIN CARLILE LITSEY

Singly, doubly, or in swarms

They rush and whirl through their brief day.

Fussing, fuming, plotting, dreaming:

Loving, lying, hating, dying.

Mistaking their grain of dust for a mammoth world.

They foolishly build memorials of marble,

And brainlessly raise commemorative shafts of stone.

They entomb their dead flesh in metal,

Like mindless ephemera.

Millions of aeons hence,

Where will be graven monolith and lettered shrine

And casket of copper?

Ask Luxor or Rome or Babylon.

But still the ego-centered midges build

In fatuous futility.

The Myth of Only One True Sonnet Form

by Robin Lampson

Robin Lampson was born in 1900 in California. After three years at Stanford University, he left in 1922 to serve in Russia with the Quaker famine relief organization. He returned to this country to take his A.B. at the University of California. He has contributed to most of the better journals, and is the author of three poetry volumes, On Reaching Sixteen, now very rare, Terza-Rima Sonnets, and Laughter Out of the Ground, the last named of which went into three printings within seven weeks, and completely sold out a de-luxe, limited edition of 250 signed copies.

I sometimes imagine that I must have bitten a hole right through my rattle with my first two teeth the first time I heard the statement that "there is only one true sonnet form, the Petrarchan"!

And this hoary, time-worn myth about the inflexible single form of the sonnet continued to dog me through school and college. The same teachers who, in high school and the university, instructed me in the sonnets of Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth, also perpetuated the myth that "the Petrarchan is the one and only true sonnet form"!

Now, after careful study and much thought, I think it is high time that someone challenged this silly dogma.

One day at Stanford University considerably more than a decade ago I heard an English professor reiterate this hardy literary decree. He was so dogmatic, by the way, that he always insisted on calling Shakespeare's Sonnets "Shakespeare's Fourteeners." Since I was familiar with the large body of better-known English sonnets and much interested in their traditional and long-honored variations in form, I that day looked up Petrarch's sonnets in the original Italian*, and discovered that Petrarch himself used *fifteen* different sonnet forms, including *four* different rhyme-schemes for the octave and *seven* for the sestet and their various combinations.

Hence, it was for me both amusing and deplorable to find, many, many months ago, in one of the little magazines devoted to verse, a fresh outcropping of this perennial dogmatism, as follows: "A sonnet is a form of verse whose length, beat, feet and rhyming scheme have been unalterably fixed. The original and pure and only true sonnet form is the one justly called *Petrarchan*. It consists of fourteen decasyllable iambic lines . . . The rhyming scheme for the octave is variably a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a. For the sestet it may be c-d-e, e-d-c, or c-d-e, c-d-e. The final couplet is absolutely barred. . . . The true sonnet cannot depart from . . . the mechanics . . . here outlined" (The author of this 11th commandment I shall refer to hereinafter as "Mr. C.")

*Le Rime di Francesco Petrarca di su gli Originali, edited by Giosue Carducci and Severino Ferrari; G. C. Sansoni, publisher; Florence, Italy, 1905.

The Myth of Only One True Sonnet Form — continued

I have recently re-checked my technical study of Petrarch's original sonnets. He wrote 317 sonnets in all—227 during the life of Laura; 90 after the death of Laura. Here is the result of my study of the rhyme-schemes of the 317 Italian originals:

There are four different octave forms:

A. So-called "regular" octaves:

1. a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a, c-d-e, c-d-e.....116 sonnets
(including one, number XVI, with identical rhymes used throughout, the words meaning "part" and "light" in the octave, and "death", "desire," and "alone" in the sestet.)
2. a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a, c-d-c, d-c-d.....108 sonnets
3. a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a, c-d-e, d-c-e..... 66 sonnets
4. a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a, c-d-c, c-d-c..... 7 sonnets
5. a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a, c-d-d, d-c-c (final couplet!)..... 4 sonnets
6. a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a, c-d-e, e-d-c (only one!)..... 1 sonnet
7. a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a, c-d-e, d-e-c..... 1 sonnet

B. Octaves of "Shakespearean" type, but with only two rhymes:

8. a-b-a-b, a-b-a-b, c-d-e, c-d-e..... 3 sonnets
9. a-b-a-b, a-b-a-b, c-d-c, d-c-d..... 3 sonnets
10. a-b-a-b, a-b-a-b, c-d-c, c-d-c..... 3 sonnets
11. a-b-a-b, a-b-a-b, c-d-e, d-c-e..... 1 sonnet

C. The same, but with the rhymes in the second quatrain reversed:

12. a-b-a-b, b-a-b-a, c-d-e, c-d-e..... 1 sonnet
13. a-b-a-b, b-a-b-a, c-d-c, d-c-d..... 1 sonnet

D. Irregular octaves, combining "Shakespearean" and "regular" quatrains:

14. a-b-a-b, b-a-a-b, c-d-e, c-d-e..... 1 sonnet
15. a-b-a-b, b-a-a-b, c-d-c, d-c-d..... 1 sonnet

The above reveals the seven different sestets occurring as follows:

1. c-d-e, c-d-e.....121
2. c-d-c, d-c-d.....113
3. c-d-e, d-c-e..... 67
4. c-d-c, c-d-c..... 10
5. c-d-d, d-c-c..... 4
6. c-d-e, e-d-c..... 1
7. c-d-e, d-e-c..... 1

The following comments on the above may be of interest: Immediately we discover that Petrarch's own octaves are *not* "invariably" a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a, but frequently a-b-a-b, a-b-a-b (conceivably the forerunner of the Shakespearean sonnet), and occasionally a-b-a-b, b-a-b-a (possibly the inspiration of the Spenserian sonnet), or a-b-a-b, b-a-a-b (which would essentially provide authority for Wordsworth's numerous and various deviations, and almost justify us in calling Shelley's "Ozymandias" a sonnet!)

The first sestet which our Mr. C. mentions, c-d-e, e-d-c, Petrarch used *only once* in all his 317 sonnets!—although the alternate which Mr. C. permits is the one most used by Petrarch. However, two other sestets, not mentioned by our dogmatist, were heavily used by Petrarch: c-d-c, d-c-d (employed 113 times by the great Italian, and extremely popular with English sonneteers); and c-d-e, d-c-e (used 67 times by Petrarch—though English poets have seen little virtue in this variation and have not used it considerably). Petrarch even employed c-d-c, c-d-c ten times;

and as for the final couplet being "absolutely barred", well, Petrarch used c-d-d, d-c-c four times! Absolutely!

However, Mr. C., after his dogmatic statement given above, backs down a bit and concedes "the recognition as *sonnets* of two forms of fourteen-line verse departing from the true sonnet. Milton . . . entirely omitted the division between the octave and sestet. Shakespeare was lazier and simplified the mechanics."

Lazier! It seems to me that Shakespeare, characteristically, completed and perfected a new form which Petrarch had only half imagined. And it is not unreasonable to suspect that Spenser might also have found in Petrarch's work the germ of the form used in his "Amoretti" sonnets—a-b-a-b, b-c-b-c, c-d-c-d, e-e (a development which adds continuity of rhyme to the Shakespearean form).

But finally our Mr. C. refutes his own claim of an "unalterably fixed" sonnet by saying, "We have therefore only three forms of fourteen-line verse which can rightly be called sonnets." I am writing this on a Sunday, and I might easily spend the rest of the week looking up and listing here other sonnet variations included in the work of the great English poets from Sir Philip Sidney to John Masefield. William Wordsworth, some of whose sonnets have displayed prime vitality, certainly played hob with Mr. C.'s "unalterably fixed" pattern and even with the "only three forms" which he allows.

Personally, I have been deeply interested in reviving what I have named "the terza-rima sonnet." In my volume, *Terza-Rima Sonnets**, I have given the 350-year but brief history of this form, as follows:

"The terza-rima sonnet (rhyme scheme a-b-a, b-c-b, c-d-c, d-e-d, e-e, or with the ending d-a-d, a-a) is, of course, an adaptation of the measure immortalized by Dante. The first English use of this form which I have been able to find is that by Sir Philip Sidney who interpolated two fourteen-line terza-rima songs in his *Arcadia*, written 1580-81.

"Shelley employed this rhyme scheme for the five stanzas of his 'Ode to the West Wind' (1819). He wrote no sonnets in this form, however.

"In Robert Frost's *West-running Brook*, published in 1928, one poem, 'Acquainted With the Night,' has the rhyme scheme a-b-a, b-c-b, c-d-c, d-a-d, a-a, with the first and last lines identical."

We cannot escape the conclusion that "sonnet" is a rather inclusive word in English, made so by good usage as well as by popular usage. Webster's *New International Dictionary of the English Language*, Second Edition, Unabridged, lists the following varieties of "sonnet": the Italian, Petrarchan, or regular; the Miltonic; the English, Elizabethan, or Shakespearean; and the Spenserian.

The meaning of "sonnet", as with thousands of other English words, has been constantly changing and growing. It originally meant "a short poem, usually amatory"—from the Italian *sonetto*, a little song. It is now more the name of a poem of a certain size and *content* than for any rigid form. We seem to have accepted fairly generally the broad fact that a sonnet consists of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter with a more or less complex rhyme-scheme favoring a few well-known patterns, the subject matter presenting, usually, a sharply divided complaint and reply, or a rise and fall like the flow and ebb of a tide.

*Published by the Archetype Press, Berkeley, California, 1935.

The Myth of Only One True Sonnet Form — continued

Only one sentence, not quoted above, of Mr. C.'s argument seems to me pertinent and basic—that "the sonnet should be elegiac rather than lyric, that is, not pure emotion but emotion tempered by intellect, or thought colored by emotion." I agree: a sonnet should stir the reader's emotions through the intellect; it is a highly-restrained intellectual lyric.

I'll admit that a good idea in a perfectly-turned conventional Petrarchan sonnet is greatly satisfying and gives me a tremendous amount of pure artistic pleasure. But when Mr. C. speaks against "loosening the restrictions laid down for sonnet writers", I can only ask innocently, "What restrictions? and laid down by whom?" It is time the ghost of this dogmatic nonsense were *laid!*

The sonnet has proved its vitality: it has been a living thing through six centuries (Petrarch lived 1304-74). It has been an organic, *growing* thing, taking on new forms and greater possibilities. Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth each added something important. Perhaps the sonnet is not yet through growing: it may be the Twentieth Century will also add something worth while.

HORSE CREEK VALLEY

LEGARDE S. DOUGHTY

I came from the slope of the hillside
Down to the cup of the valley;
Down from the sensuous hillside
Where jasmine and jonquil and dogwood
And clusters of courtly wistaria
Grow rhythmic in absolute scansion
On lawns of the many-roomed houses.

I think, from the height of the vulture
(But through eyes of a diligent artist),
The hill must look much like a lyric:
The roofs of red, curved terra cotta,
And green lawns and pink and white dogwood
And jasmine and courtly wistaria.
The mockingbird flies on the hillside
And so does the thrush and the thrasher.

There's a hum in the cup of the valley,
A sound that is fierce and electric.
The flowers that grow in the valley
Are stumped white and yellow wild daisies
In straggling ranks around brickpiles
(For such is the look of the lint mill),
And rangy and wild honeysuckle,
Altruistic, abundant sweet flower,
That clings to precarious fences
As quick and as lush and contented
As it clings to sun dials on the hillside.
And birds flying 'round in the valley
Are sparrows of querulous chatter,
Flying from trucks, sharply crying
Vernacular oaths for the horses.

Why did I walk down to the valley,
The cold mathematical valley,
Leaving the luminous hillside,
Leaving the rhythm of the lyric?
I think I grew tired of beauty,
Of selfish and squanderous beauty,
And sought for the truth of the valley;
For truth is more vital than beauty,
Than selfish and squanderous beauty.

I walked through the street of the valley,
The street that is all of the village;
The one street of square wooden boxes,
All painted the yellow of jaundice;
The street like a narcotic needle
That straight to the veins of the lint mill
Injects periodical action.
But one little drop of the action
Had somehow got back of the plunger;
And now it was trickling swiftly
To enter the blood of the lint mill
That already shot with the first shot
It craves at the crow of the morning
Was humming in nimble reaction.
The last drop, in rear of the plunger—
But turn from the point metaphoric;
The figure of speech has no merit
Compared to the swift slender figure
That slipped down the street to the lint mill.

Her hair was the color of sun threads
That curl through a bottle of sherry.
Her features were such even a woman
Would turn twice to look at in passing;
And a man would swear over for having
But two shot-like pupils to see them.

I stood by a pine as she passed me.
A little behind her I followed
Down toward the hum of the lint mill.
The click of her heels was as rapid
And sure as the tick of a wrist watch,
And all the firm curves of her body
Made quick and resilient motion.
Her lips were immobile in silence,
But still I am sure she was singing.
In silence she sang, for I heard it;
And this is the song she was singing:

*Hasten, hasten, little feet,
Hasten down the narrow street.
You were better fit for dancing!—
Hasten, hasten, Time's advancing.
Now the sun is on the hill;*

Horse Creek Valley — continued

*Bales of cotton at the mill.
Hurry, hurry, little toes;
Take me where the bobbin goes.
Do I sin with idle talking?
Were you only made for walking?—
Tell me, tell me, little heart,
Can you love my miller's art?*

Then only the hum of the lint mill.
Gone was the girl and her singing—
The drop trickling back of the plunger
Had run to the blood of the lint mill.

Why did I walk down to the valley,
The cold, mathematical valley,
Leaving the luminous hillside,
Leaving the rhythm of the lyric?
I think I grew tired of beauty,
Of selfish and squanderous beauty,
And sought for the truth of the valley,
Truth of a simple sweet mill girl
Who walked to the spinning-room singing;
Nor singing the sweetness of living,
Nor moved by the verve of prim gardens,
But singing in spite of the terror
Of clocks and of whistles, of red bricks,
Of yarns and of bobbins and spindles,
Of monster machines and of lint-fog,
Of terrible, terrible humming,
Of fierce and electrical humming.—
Singing half consciously eager
And singing half consciously weary;
Half-knowing, half-loving, half-ruing
The only life given her for living.

I must have come down to the valley
To think of the authors of lint mills,
To fix my thumb under my nose-point
And wiggle my digits right at them.—
Not men who invent the devices;
Not men who pay wages for labor;
Not men who place money at interest,
Not any who, plagued with his bothers,
Sees little beyond his existence,
One little pursuit and existence.

I must have come down to the valley
To think of the authors of lint mills;
The sickening frog-bellied sophists
Who, seeing man's grievous unbalance,
Stick quarter cigars in their gullets
And tell vicious lies about talents.
They are the authors of lint mills
And peonage stereotypic.

Through a tessellate pattern of windows
I saw her again in a moment.
Her fingers were busily agile;
And taut wires flicking before her,
She looked like a harpist extracting
McDowell's Wild Rose from their vibrance.
Again she was silently singing;
Quite silent, but singing. I heard her.
Then only the hum of the lint mill,
Monotonous m-m-m of the lint mill—
The hum of a lewd-house piano
Just after the silver's inserted,
Before it's de-alchemized into
Cheap spangles of tin on the eardrums.

I walked by an empty red gulley
The eighth of a mile down to Horse Creek.
I stopped where the clear water ripples
Quickly in pebbly rapids.
The ripples were rapidly reeling
Some phrase. And I finally caught it:
Peonage, peonage, peonage,
Peonage stereotypic.

I SAY, JOHN SMITH

KATHLEEN SUTTON

Are these the shores, I say, are these the shores
You sought in the bright salt dawn, and pausing, leaned a moment on the
oars
To gaze on a sky caressed by wind-blown trees,
Mountains and sun-warmed rocks in that fresh light gilded beyond all
probabilities
Of hope? John Smith, soldier of fortune, leader of men, I say
Was there ever a fairer bay?

There were many to follow, fearing a wilderness
Of woody, silent deeps, alert with the savage, uneasy with wild beast, less
Than a public square where for theft of a loaf a head
Must answer the bloody basket . . . (Even then bread
Was costly, John Smith. It was never a simple ration.) . . .
As you leaned on your oars that morning, could you sense a terrible cry
Rising higher than those dark pines rimming the coast—rising higher than
they were high:
"Mercy, my lord, mercy! Transportation!"

It was a wild, unholy frontier you painted with knowing quill
To a pastoral of brook, sweet valley and pleasant hill.

Say, John Smith — continued

But they heard, John Smith, those cravers of light. They heard, nor suspected the marrow

Chilled by a shriek in the hellish night, the deadly hiss of an arrow,
The glint in a fiendish eye, a red hand clutching the hair . . .

Yet was ever a land more fair,

Richer in hope and freedom for strong men chafing at chains

Forged by a civilization? Such were the gains

You saw that night in the campfire and the frosty light of stars, as you stood erect

With steady eyes in that dreadful clamoring circle decked

In plunder of wild turkey—and balanced your life

Between the young pity of Pocahontas and the flash of a taunting knife!

How swift the years to ebb the passionate flood!

A fireside legend, a schoolroom romance—thus at last the bright spilled blood

Finds rest, and the land gives way

To the doubtful progress of envy . . . I say, John Smith, I say

Are these the shores you sought? These waters everywhere patrolled

In the name of Power? A freedom snatched and sold

As a wild thing ever must be—as the dark pines, rising tall,

Learned the victorious steel and surrendered their roots to a strange, impersonal wall

Concreting the sky . . . And listen now . . . do you hear it again,

The wail for bread on the mouths of restless starving men

Chafing at chains? . . . John Smith, I have seen you pass

A hundred times in the street—I have come upon you asleep in the forbidden grass

Of the parks . . . John Smith, John Smith, in the mills, the mines, on the dole, haunted by fear or disgrace—

Who lives and does not recognize your face?

Wipe the dust from your brow at last, and dream of another frontier

Promising hope . . . Yet what dark princess will interfere

This time to save your neck? And where is a spreading wilderness

Outside of the brain's confusion? . . . I say, John Smith, I say,

What is the legend of faith you are writing today?

AMERICAN NOCTURNE

S. RAIZISS

This August night has spread the crops with sleep
Spread the beasts and men with thick sleep
And one thin counterpane of light laid down
Like water on the land.

These are the days
Of harvest; the lordly corn is stooped in rows
Of galley-slaves proscribed to the singing whip
Of storms that stamp and stride the acres, leaving
Upon the heels of threats; the melons rot
In heedless beds, the trees grow autumn-thin,
And men are poor. They sleep because the night
Is here.

The waking sleeper lies within
The coolness of his skin, beneath the moon,
Beneath the patterned throw of linden leaves,
And listens to the katydids that prose
Forever through the dark, to frogs that fugue
On muted xylophones within the marsh.
The cool moon refers his heart to peace.

*But far and far the hounds are wailing, hounds
With ghostly language for their game in forests
Out of sight but recent to the heart.
Their splitting throats demand the quarry—lust
Gives voice like agony to cryptic woods . . .
And now is still.*

A horror laps him round
As with a chill—only the visiting wind
Involving the tree above his cot and walking
On . . . So memory embraces him
With frosty flames.

Remember, wakeful sleeper,
How the peacock evening spread its tail
And showed the painted stars, voluptuously,
Then with a melancholy pomp outstepped
Across the land.

*But dogs are moaning there
With hollow pity after prey. Remember
They bay beneath a moon which also sees
How maniac waves repeat their suicide
On broken European shores, how beauty
Goes. But beauty comes again tomorrow.*

American Nocturne — continued

Here he lies within the coolness of
His skin beneath the coolness of the moon
In Maryland.

The vassal freemen sleep
In tilting shacks—sleep with throats too quiet
After song among the idle crops.
The blacks are silent; their hearts must rest in slumber.

*But the dogs remember conquest in the forest
Sad at night as Africa.*

The katydids
Converse, the frogs and crickets mix their music,
The sleeper awakens and remembers now . . .

KANSAS

GLEN BAKER

this land of undulating prairies,
this geographic center of the nation,
a veritable Pandora's Box
out of which has arisen
many strange and irrelevant things,

Jayhawkers
with a New England conscience,

John Brown
the Ossawatimie abolitionist,

Carrie Nation
and her crusading hatchet,

Prohibition!
"Sockless Jerry Simpson"
running for congress,

Doctor John R. Brinkley
the modern medical magician,
renovator of old men.
Kansas is a long series of exclamation marks
in the national mind.

II

large counties pieced together
like a crazy quilt,
towns and cities appliqued
upon its surface,
old world names and new—
Wichita, Topeka, Wakarusa,

Runnymede, Humboldt, St. John,
one enormous fabric
intricately quilted
by many roads.

III

a tourist camp sign:
"Coronado passed through here
try our cabins (75c)."
grain elevators in long rows
like wet-cell batteries
germinating the strength
of a nation.

IV

Kansas is a shrewd old man
with white hair
and young eyes
looking toward the future,
enjoying the amazement
of his contemporaries.

V

when it thunders in Kansas
that is the tumbleweed of public opinion
gathering momentum enough
to roll across the national sky.

THE STEP DAUGHTER

TRAVIS TUCK JORDAN

She stands, a morbid child with searching eyes,
And hands that move like trembling wind-blown leaves
Her curious, scarlet-threaded mouth retrieves
Her plain face to a beauty strange and wise.
Aloof she stands, wrapped close in pride's disguise,
Lonely and wan, an alien who grieves,
As cold and distant as the hill that cleaves
Dark stormy shadows circling the skies.

Quiet she stands in sullen mutiny,
Watching the bride descend the winding stair,
Her sombre eyes burning with jealousy,
Like angry stars beneath her dusky hair;
Then turns her cheek to meet the smiling mouth,
Brighter than crushed petunias from the south.

WALL STREET PRAYER

ALFRED MORANG

Make them well, brothers . . .
give no heed to the laughter
of molten steel.
Shape them, these shells,
swift needles of death.
They will rip your sons . . .
carefully, brothers,
lest they hurt the gun's sleek mouth.

Faster . . . waste no time . . .
tomorrow there will be the marching young . . .
tomorrow, songs of glory,
and after that . . .

Brothers, hurry . . .
rising from the field of agony there will be
clouds that will rain dollars . . .
sweet, sweet, green dollars.
Cast them well . . . close your ears
to the hissing mirth
your sons will be too afraid to hear.

And when it is over, still make them well . . .
needles of death.
Hear no voices
in the slithering whisper
of hot steel
cast for the unborn,
that they may be cradled in fire.

Pray thinly to this christ of yours
with a crown
of dollars . . .
pray softly, so as not to disturb
the whisper of molten steel,
to god, most high dictator . . .
the gracious keeper of your sons.

Narcissus

by Rosamond Peirce

"Narcissus" is the first published story of Miss Peirce, who writes us from New Bedford, Massachusetts, that she was born in that city in 1904. She is a graduate of Friends' Academy, New Bedford, and Miss Choate's School, Brookline. She was the recipient in 1930 of one of the Scribner's Magazine story criticism awards, and has since done reviewing for the Boston Evening Transcript.

SHE ran lightly up the front steps of her home and fitted her key into the lock. She had done the same thing hundreds of times before, but now there was a thrill of excitement in the act. A strange, fluttering feeling that made her quite breathless. The door closed behind her with a bang. Good heavens! What a tremendously loud noise it made, for a moment, and it did seem odd not to hear someone call, "who is that?" She stood perfectly still, fairly drinking in the emptiness of the house. This was delightful; to be alone, absolutely alone all night, and for the first time in her life. She could do anything she wished, anything, and no one would know.

It had not been easy to persuade Mother and Father to make the trip. That suggestion about a holiday being good for them had been the "coup de maitre"; in fact everything had been managed rather well. Just the right word in the right place. Not too much enthusiasm, that would have been fatal. They would have imagined a motive behind it. Mother, in particular, was always finding motives, or thinking that a person was going to "do something." She never said just what, but it was certain to be something that wasn't "quite nice." Perhaps she was regretting the fact that she had failed to do those not "quite nice" things herself, when she had been nineteen; or perhaps she *had* done them and wanted to keep the

memories, miser-like, hoarded within her; memories all nicely polished and strung together, with a little scarlet knot between each one to prevent them from slipping.

Well, memories or not, her parents were on the train and she was alone. She took off her hat and coat, and fluffed her hair before the hall mirror. What was that verse in *The Ancient Mariner*, "*Alone, alone, all, all alone; alone on a wide, wide sea; and never a saint took pity . . . no, nor a sinner either.*" There was a fascinating sound to the word sinner, and it rhymed with so many things, such as dinner and inner. Soon she would be getting her dinner and then it would be inner . . . that of course was silly, in fact, positively idiotic; but what did it matter?

SHE walked into the living room and stood looking around, as though seeing it for the first time. Everything was as usual. It must be her absurd imagination that made a difference, for there *was* a difference. It came creeping out from the silence, surrounding her with mystery. It was as if the chairs and sofa had suddenly slipped off their familiar coverings before her eyes and had revealed gorgeous colors underneath. Each one had become an individual entity, fascinating and friendly. What a graceful curve the back of the sofa had, and its cushions were swelling, fairly bursting with comfort, like the portly fronts

Narcissus — continued

of old gentlemen. Perhaps she should apologize for having treated them so casually in the past. Suppose she should say, "I beg your pardon, my dear sofa. You are really very lovely and unusual, not at all commonplace as I had thought. Please forgive me." She smiled and made a little courtesy, sinking with mock gravity to the floor; then springing up, walked over to the table.

How different the cyclamen plant looked. That morning it had been detestable because the water had run off a leaf onto the table, but now . . . now it was enchanted like the rest of the house. Its petals glowed as though they had been infused with subtle flame. She touched one and shivered at its softness. It was like having a person in the room; perhaps it *was* a person, who at midnight would spring into life. Already the leaves seemed to quiver and move. Of course it was only her breath, she had leaned too close, but it was such fun to pretend that she took a very deep breath and blew again.

The sofa held out inviting arms. What perfect luxury it was to throw oneself down on it. What bliss, not to have to jump up to answer the telephone or to turn off the radio. Just to lie there one minute, two minutes, whole eons of minutes. She could see them stretching into the distance like so many steps, and every sixtieth one was very grand and imposing, for that was an hour. She smiled and even wiggled her toes a little, like a cat kneading its paws, perfectly content. Probably Mother and Father were wondering what their daughter was doing. At any rate, they had no cause to worry. They had made her promise enough things; not to go out after dark, not to answer the door bell, not to leave anything unlocked . . . endless,

endless "nots" which were impossible to remember. And then at the last moment, as the train had pulled out, Mother had called from the window, "Don't forget to turn out the gas heater after your bath." It *had* been embarrassing. Everyone had smiled and looked at her, and in her hurry to get away she had nearly collided with a baggage truck.

She moved slightly from side to side. How nice it was; the feeling of the cushions close around her and the absolute, perfect stillness. Funny, she had never noticed it before, but then, people were always moving about, talking. They broke up the silence into hundreds of pieces which flew off into space. It was only when one was alone that one could pick up the bits and put them together into beautiful, intricate patterns, which were sensations; and the patterns this afternoon . . . The cyclamen blossoms, resting on their stems like half poised flamingos; the sunlight curling up on a gorgeous blue pillow, as though it were already drowsy with sleep, and could not wait for night to hide it; the shadows moving without any perceptible motion . . . All those slight sounds which make the silence; the ticking of the clock, one moment loudly heard, the next, hardly discernible; the spasmodic cracking of some invisible muscle in the furniture . . . all this filled her with the sense that everything around her was alive and that she herself was breathing in the same unreal, fantastic way.

It grew darker. The cushion became a fire-eater and devoured every bit of the sun streak. Did it feel hot, with that tail of flame inside of it? Now if *she* had swallowed it, she would have felt like burnished copper inside and out. Perhaps she would have become a copper statue. There was some-

thing quite original about that. One was always seeing so many bronze and plaster figures around, but copper . . . Mother would approve, being a person who liked to have things "different". Of course, if she were a statue, she would be of no use in the house, unless as a hatrack, for example. In that case Father's friends might have some compunctions about covering her with their overcoats. Doubtless they would start coming bareheaded and in their jackets. It would be hard on them in the winter, so she would probably have to be placed somewhere else, perhaps in the garden. What fun to stay out all night and feel the wind and the rain beating on her with that dull, hollow sound which she loved. If they had overnight guests they might tell at breakfast how they enjoyed hearing the rain on the tin roof, and Mother would say sweetly, "Oh that wasn't on the roof. That was falling on our daughter, out in the garden, you know. You simply must come and see her in the sunlight." The ladies would murmur, "so lifelike, isn't it?" and move on quickly; but the gentlemen would linger, looking very hard, and presently she would wink one eye, just the faintest suggestion of a wink, and they would pretend to each other that they had not noticed and plan to come back later. It would be most amusing to watch them grope their way through the shrubbery, after dark, and to see them meet before her, trying to explain about a lost cuff link or pocket knife. On second thought it might be more fun to be used as a door-stop in the living room, or better still, in the guest room. Mother could say, "You will see my daughter later," and when the guests were asleep she would come to life and dance for them. She could imagine herself gliding over the waves of the bed puff, and the occupants of the

room peering at her and wishing that they had not taken that last serving of Welsh Rabbit, . . . that is, if they were lady guests, if they were gentlemen they would wish they had eaten more.

HOW silly she was! She would get up and draw the draperies and play some of her favorite records; but after the fire and the candles had been lighted, she dared not break the silence. All her engaging phantoms were more completely shut in with her than ever; at any noise they might vanish. The shadows became moving patterns, each to be explored; but before indulging in that exquisite pleasure, the wing chair must be pushed near the fire and the little mahogany end-table (which looked like a giant toadstool cut in half) placed in front of it. Splendid! She would have her dinner here, in this room, with all the candle light and softness; and now to put on something that suited the evening. Her new negligee would be just the thing. It was of the sheerest chiffon, light blue, with touches of lavender and silver, and . . . the next thought made her fairly tingle with pleasure. She could do a thing she had never dared to do before; not even in her own room, for fear someone might come in . . . to discard the concealing slip she had always worn, and to feel the delicious lightness of the chiffon cling to her bare body.

She dashed up the stairs, taking off her rings and wrist watch on the way. Jewelry was not to be thought of tonight; just herself and the exquisite gown. It was a positive joy to pull it out from the dark closet where it had been hanging between two uninteresting dresses. Ah . . . the lovely, lovely thing! Like sea foam at twilight, and she would be a sea-maiden, dancing in a robe of mist until the sun rose and

Narcissus — continued

the mist disappeared. What ugly, prosaic things clothes were. In a moment hers were tossed aside and the sheer material fell straight from her shoulders to the floor. A curious sense of fairy lightness possessed her. It was like emerging from the drab insignificance of a grub into the winged beauty of a butterfly. She began moving about the room, catching swift glances of herself in the mirror; then she raised her arms, shaking them slightly, so that the chiffon rippled and quivered like the shivering of giant wings. Her dressing table mirror was far too small. The long one in the lower hall would be much more satisfactory. As she went down the stairs the gauzy stuff drifted away from her, like little detached clouds, and laughing, she put out her hands as though to capture them and bring them back. She ran up to the glass and stood silently regarding herself. The light was behind her and her body was clearly outlined. It was like marble, but a marble that had suddenly become alive and was gently touched with rose. She was lovely, really lovely, and she had never known it before. It was such an exciting discovery that her breath came in quick gasps of pleasure, as she danced back and forth. One moment she was a nymph, emerging timidly from the shadows, the next she was a dryad and the glass became a clear pool, where she kissed her own reflection.

IN the midst of this the great clock in the corner struck six deep, musical notes, like an enchanted wood-wind instrument. The sound swayed and vibrated on the silence and then wandered off as though it had disappeared down a long, dark path. The hour reminded her of the fact that it was time for dinner; so with one last caressing wave to

her other self, she went slowly out to the refrigerator to see what had been left for her. There was a large piece of roast beef on the lower shelf, looking very unlike food for a nymph. How was it possible to eat that on a tea table and dressed as she was? It seemed so incongruous, so absolutely out of tone with the whole evening, and yet, luncheon had been a long time ago and she realized she was frightfully hungry. A small piece eaten right here in the pantry, and then forgotten immediately could not spoil the atmosphere which had been created. She carried it to the table and nibbled at a thin, dainty slice. It was delicious, so delicious in fact, that two more slices, much larger than the first followed in quick succession. On the way back, a horrible thought struck her. Suppose someone had seen her through the window. They would think her mad, walking around in such a costume and carrying a platter of meat; or else they might think she was practising the part of Salome. Perhaps she should have danced a little, swinging the dish back and forth with very slow and graceful motions, so that the contents would not fall. Had Salome had any difficulty in that respect? Somehow one never pictured John's head rolling about or darting off into space. . . . "John, John, come to me, from out the deep cistern," murmured Salome. "Let me touch you, John, with these slim, beautiful hands which all men crave to possess. They are yours, my beloved, without the asking. I want your lips upon mine and your white throat beneath my fingers; your smooth, white throat, like a tower of ivory, so soon to be a fallen tower, bathed in blood. John . . . where are you? Speak to me . . . Open your lips, so that I may taste their sweetness . . . John, you

belong to me, for I have possessed you," cried Salome, before she died beneath the shields of Herod's soldiers . . .

Once again she approached the refrigerator and surveyed its interior more thoroughly. In back, where Mother had placed them, very carefully, were some anchovy sandwiches. Her favorite kind. She would have these with some fruit salad and iced tea, and a few of the little wafer-like cookies, which had nuts sprinkled over them.

She carried the things into the living room and sat down before her toadstool of a table. How delightful it was, to eat the juicy cherries and pieces of pear, and the thin cookies, so thin and delicate that each one was like biting into a shadow; to sip the iced tea slowly, to the last drop, and then pushing aside the table, to lie back in her chair, luxuriously content. She lifted the blue drapery and studied the slender curve of her foot and leg. It *was* nice, and it was all hers. She possessed it as completely as Salome had possessed John, and to her surprise there was supreme satisfaction in the thought. Only once before in her life had she had a similar feeling and that had been years ago. Who had given her that mounted blue-jay? She couldn't remember, but she did remember the soft, haunting beauty of the thing, and the fact that she could gaze at it, touch it, and that it belonged to her and wouldn't fly away. How proud she had been to allow the other children to just look at it. No queen could have bestowed a greater favor upon her subjects; and now her own beauty, was it not far superior, more sanctified than that other loveliness? The very ultimate edge of pleasure would be to show

it . . . to let other sensitive fingers, besides her own, touch it . . .

THE thought made her spring up from her chair and walk restlessly about the room. In the candle-light the cyclamen blossoms became alive with flame. She looked at them fascinated. The unexplored shadows in the corners reached out and set her fingers into motion, and in a moment her robe lay on the floor. Her gaze wandered again toward the cyclamen. In some strange way it seemed to beckon. Were those dark centers eyes which looked at her? She bent over it curiously. They were somnolent eyes, half veiled . . . The flowers touched her flesh and darted it with little cool arrows, tipped with fire. She trembled violently and pressed her lips, her body, against the petals. "Look at me. Tell me I am beautiful," she cried.

The sound of her voice was terrifying in the stillness. It was like a wild, discordant cry, vibrating through the room, as though seeking an outlet; but there was none. It was shut in with the phantoms and the shadows and it slowly stifled and killed them. Everything disappeared, even the silence shrivelled and became commonplace. Her dream-world was destroyed. She looked down at the cyclamen. Perhaps that had escaped, it had been so real; but no, its petals hung limp and crushed where she had pressed them.

What a fool she had been to think these things alive. What a fool . . . what a fool . . . She put her hands over her face and the tears trickled down her arms. For the first time that night, in fact, for the first time in her life, she felt alone.

TRUNCATIONS

'The time has come,' the Walrus said,
 'To talk of many things:
 Of shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax—
 Of cabbages—and kings—
 And why the sea is boiling hot—
 And whether pigs have wings.'
 —LEWIS CARROLL

This issue, Volume 5, Number 3, of FANTASY is, according to record, the Winter, 1935 issue of the magazine. We make this announcement in order that subscribers and other readers may know whether copies of the magazine have failed to reach them. The delay in publication has been ours, and we apologize for it, begging your understanding of the financial situation which caused such a delay, and reminding you that, after all, we are in no worse a position than Mark Twain's celebrated watch which was in November enjoying the snow, while the October leaves were still turning. Another issue we hope to have follow shortly, and a back-to-normal publication date is anticipated for the near future. We wish to make clear there will be no doubling of issues; the full quota is to be made up. It is only our chronology that has been impaired . . .

Our personal nomination for the literary treasure of the autumn season is the Edgar Lee Masters autobiography, *Across Spoon River*, from Farrar & Rinehart. "Don't think I don't know that I have given myself away," writes Mr. Masters . . . J. Redwood Anderson (Hull, East Yorks, England) is again represented in this issue, with "The Door". A poetic drama of his, published some years ago in book form under the title of *Babel*, is being produced at the Mercury Theatre, London, under the title *The Tower to Heaven* . . . Scribner's will bring out in October the collected poetry of John Hall Wheelock under the title, *Poems*, 1911-1936. . . . We are sorry that space limitations suddenly forced us to omit a review of Haniel Long's *Pittsburgh Mem-*

oranda. The "Prologue" and "Epilogue" appearing in this issue were to have appeared in that most excellent book, but were dropped at the last moment. Mr. Long was born in Burma in 1888, studied at Exeter and Harvard, and took a job on the *New York Globe*. He taught at the Carnegie Technology School in Pittsburgh (now Carnegie Institute of Technology), but moved to Santa Fe, N. Mex. in 1929. The *Memoranda* is his fourth book. . . George Abbe (New Orleans, La.), also new to us with "Here Is Your Face", is Connecticut-born, 1911, and a graduate of the University of New Hampshire, where he taught English a year. He recently edited *Hill Wind*, a collection of his brother's writings, who died in 1930 . . . Leane Zugsmith's novel, *A Time to Remember* (Random House) will appear September. Its peak is a strike among the obscure workers of a metropolitan department store . . . A message from Arthur Davison Ficke will interest our readers in the light it casts on the admirable work of Edgar Lee Masters: "Your remarks on Masters' biography of Lindsay are excellent. But there is one point which I think you could well stress a little more. This is the notable and frank generosity with which Masters writes of his principal rival. There is, of course, no reason why one poet should not rejoice in the fine work of another poet: only, that does not always happen. Masters has many enemies, for when he hits he hits very hard; but he also has many friends, and his generosity to Lindsay, in life and in death, is greatly to his credit. I knew Lindsay well; he used to visit me when I lived in Davenport.

Masters is quite right: Lindsay's best work is one of our most valuable literary treasures." We are grateful to Mr. Ficke for these words.

August W. Derleth is finishing *Still Is the Summer Night*, the first of a definitely major opus to comprise twelve novels, each a unit, and the whole forming a century history of Sac Prairie (Sauk City), Wis. Five publishers are considering the work, our bet being that Scribner's will bring it out . . . Charles Hudeburg (New York, N. Y.), "The Simple Prayer", this issue, was born twenty-five years ago in Tennessee, and received his A.B. several years ago from his state university . . . The Black Cat Press is turning out beautiful volumes of poetry these days. Their latest catalogue is worth looking over (4940 Winthrop Avenue, Chicago, Ill.) . . . J. H. Gipson of the Caxton Printers is still amused over the refusal of a Greenwich Village publication to print an advertisement of Samuel Loveman's book, *The Hermaphrodite*. "Fancy," thinks he, "the old lady from Dubuque shocking the sophisticated circles of Greenwich Village!" . . . Winfield Townley Scott (Providence, R. I.), who makes a first appearance here with "To My Son: for His Integrity", was born in 1910, taking a degree at Brown University five years ago. He is on the editorial staff of the *Providence Journal*, and has been in the better literary papers. Covici-Friede is bringing out a book of his poems this autumn, *Biography for Traman* . . . The Summer University Review, published by the University of Kansas City, Kansas City, Mo., carries a splendid translation from Heine by Edgar Lee Masters; also a much needed study of Philip Freneau, Poet of the American Revolution, by Mrs. Masters; the issue boasts an insert lithograph of an Ozark Fiddler, by Thomas Benton. Like all issues of the *Review*, this is well worth owning . . . *The*

Melancholy Lute, selected songs from F. P. A.'s past thirty years, will be welcomed by his many followers (Viking) . . . Edward Weismiller (Appleton, Wis.) is a twenty year old undergraduate at Cornell College, Mount Vernon, Ia. He has just learned from Stephen Vincent Benet, director of the Yale Series of Younger Poets, that a book of his poems has been selected for the award and will be published by the Yale University Press this fall. "Winter Breath", this issue, is included . . . Thomas B. Sweeney has done the *Legend of Leonardo* in verse to be issued by Putnam . . . "Even Now in 1936" is the first magazine appearance of Evan Lodge (Ohio). He is a high school English teacher in Cleveland, though in the past has enjoyed such varied occupations as working in a steel mill, on a country newspaper, and as an Ordinary Seaman on a British tramp. At the immediate present, he is collecting biological specimens, chiefly grasshoppers, in Florida.

talaria, a poetry quarterly, edited by B. Y. Williams and Annette Patton Cornell, has appeared at The Phelps, Cincinnati, Ohio, and deserves a good, long life . . . Sherwood Anderson is on the Scribner fall list with *Kit Brandon: a Portrait*, a novel . . . Newcomers to our pages this issue include Glen Baker (Hutchinson, Kans.), James Laughlin IV (Pittsburgh, Penna.), Sarah Litsey (Norwalk, Conn.), Mabel Posegate (Cincinnati, O.), S. Raiziss (Philadelphia, Penna.), Harold Vinal (New York, N. Y.), and Mary N. S. Whiteley (Washington, D. C.) . . . The Grabhorn Press is supervising the typography of Sara Bard Field's new book of poems, *Darkling Plain* for Random House . . . Display of the Modern Library edition of Villon's poems in the motion picture, *The Petrified Forest*, resulted in several hundred orders for the book. Unfortunately for all concerned, the title had been dis-

carded two years ago because of increasing public apathy to the works of Villon . . . Incidentally, *The Complete Works of Horace*, edited by Prof. Casper J. Kraemer, of N. Y. U., is now available in the Library . . . Extract from the *New Yorker*, week of March 28, 1936, is worthy of reprint: "The publishers of a forthcoming volume of poetry have advised us that by subscribing to it we can have our name 'incorporated into the front matter of the book' along with the names of the other subscribers. This, of course, would immortalize us as a person who once read a book—or at any rate as a person who once intended to read a book. It is not the sort of immortality we crave, our feeling being that deathlessness should be arrived at in a more haphazard fashion. Loving fame as much as any man, we shall carve our initials in the shell of a tortoise and turn him loose in a peat bog." . . .

A well selected anthology of English sonnets is out this month, edited by Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch (Crowell) . . . Not long ago, a thirty-two page pamphlet, *Tame Age and Other Poems by a Bostonian*, published in 1827, turned up in a second-hand furniture shop in West Baltimore, and was bought, along with five other books, for \$1.25. But the proprietor of the shop discovered his loss and threatened suit. The book was, of course, by Edgar Allan Poe, and has sold for as high as \$30,000 . . . As an indication of Amy Lowell's continued vitality, her publishers offer the information that they receive approximately 100 clippings about her each month. In other words, she is mentioned in print about three times every day . . . Blue Ribbon Books will publish in early fall *The Complete Rhyming Dictionary and Poet's Craft Book*. . . . Under a new editor, *Scribner's Magazine* will make

some changes in October—a larger size, nine by twelve inches, with illustrations and photographs on coated stock, fifty per cent of contents fiction, and articles of domestic flavor—and a probable price reduction . . . The Silver Mark Twain Medal, given annually for preeminence in literature, has been awarded to Edgar Lee Masters for his Lindsay biography. Other recipients have been Kipling, Belloc, Tarkington, Cather, E. A. Robinson, and Stephen Leacock . . . "Leopardi, the greatest poet of modern Italy, who longed for Death in exquisite rhymes ever since he was a boy, was the first to fly in abject terror from cholera-stricken Naples." (*The Story of San Michele*, Axel Munthe.) . . . "This individually affixed Gold Label signifies that we are extending you a Special Personal Invitation to contribute, as we have good reason to believe that your poetry will be found acceptable." The flattering implications of this invitation to a prospective sonnet anthology filled our editorial heart to bursting until a stray sentence on the reverse side of the card—"we have little sympathy with the average quality of the unmetered (not to add unrhymed) free verse, which is rapidly losing ground"—filled us with the awful fear that the card was not meant for us after all. Perhaps the writer's fingers are not so firm "on the pulse of the American poetry scene" as he says. At any rate, it isn't a good card to send to one who favors free verse. However, if anyone cares to contribute, we'll advance the address. . . . In the current 1936 edition of *The Best Short Stories* (Houghton Mifflin), Edward J. O'Brien lists FANTASY among the thirteen magazines printing the best short fiction. We are grateful to Mr. O'Brien for this commendation. There is no critic of the short story we'd rather please . . .

REVIEWS---Poetry and Prose

"In the name of common sense, Mr. Pendennis", Shandon asked, "what have you been doing—praising one of Mr. Bacon's books? . . ."

Pen's eyes opened with wide astonishment. "Do you mean to say", he asked, "that we are to praise no books that Bacon publishes: or that, if the books are good, we are to say they are bad?"

—THACKERAY

A twofold purpose is accomplished by Babette Deutsch's *This Modern Poetry* (W. W. Norton & Co., Inc. 284 pp. \$2.75)—first, an explanation is made of the vagaries and obscurities often laid against modern poetry, and second, the development of the past two decades of verse is traced. Miss Deutsch shows herself a thorough critic and scholar in this present work, one capable of quoting felicitously innumerable examples from poets of every age and clime. Limited as we have been in seeing her work only in brief reviews and a single slim critical volume, we come now to a fuller appreciation of her capabilities.

We begin with a brief and particularly enlightening introductory section based on Whitman and Dickinson. John M. Synge is credited with the necessary impetus in a "Returning to Realism" chapter, though it remained for Masfield to bring downright brutality into English verse, in a manner that might have assured Wordsworth "that poets were beginning to have the courage of his convictions." Frost, Lindsay, Masters, and Sandburg are then dealt with as our contribution to the movement. Miss Deutsch does not succeed beyond others in her explanation of the imagist theory, as expounded by T. E. Hulme, with its method of escape from the "steaming bath of sentiment in which English poetry had lolled for too long", but she does succeed in throwing light upon the work of H. D., W. C.

Williams, and Ezra Pound of the Pygmalion touch, with some well-deserved secondary notice of Marianne Moore and Lola Ridge. Under "Bearers of Tradition" come Harold Monro's Georgian poets, "characterized by a tender-minded quietism", with one of the finest studies of the book, that of Walter de la Mare. Subsequent sections discuss T. S. Eliot (Miss Deutsch's study of *The Waste Land* is well worthwhile), James Joyce, and Hart Crane, and others, closing with the trio of English revolutionary idealists, Spender, Lewis, and Auden.

It is inevitable in a book of this nature that one is annoyed by the omission of, or the stress on, a particular poet. We, for instance, value the attention given the far too long neglected Wilfred Owen, among the war poets, but feel that Edward Thomas might well have had a share in it. The treatment of Elinor Wylie and D. H. Lawrence is rather curt, considering that their work has been lent a certain perspective by death. We miss any mention whatsoever of Tzara and Cowley, who, whatever one's personal reaction may be, are important as exponents of a school.

But in all fairness, it must be said that Miss Deutsch maintains a well detached attitude; all the dangers incident to contemporaneity are avoided. She is eminently sane and fair, with many enthusiasms, particular among them being Yeats, and few dislikes. Being a poet in her own right, the cause of the modern

is close to her heart. "Modern verse," she writes, in a concluding summary, "while it may not be better than the old, is better *for us*, because it interprets, in a living language, a living world, and from that vantage point looks into the dark abyss of the uncreated." This should not be interpreted that she offers a general apologia for all that is queer and radical in modern verse. Not an extremist herself, her disapprovals, lightly voiced, are of this sort. E. E. Cummings, for instance, is capable of "tricks which don't quite come off", though he is credited with vivid pictures of metropolitan life, resultant from his "idiosyncratic use of language."

This Modern Poetry is decidedly readable. There are many respects in which it is superior to *New Voices*, which has always been important for its treatment of the modern temper. No one interested in modern verse can well avoid it. It is, incidentally, tastefully and well put out.

It is late in the day of this, our world, to write of the importance of William Langland's *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, now rendered into modern English by Henry W. Wells (Sheed & Ward, Inc. xxix—304 pp. \$3.00). But it is a work the importance of which is sometimes slighted except by scholars. Langland is at times too likely to be passed by in the shadow cast by Chaucer, just as the Elizabethans were dulled by Shakespeare's brilliance.

Professor Wells has done a great and thorough work in modernizing the *Vision* for us. The dreams of *Piers Plowman* are as applicable to our present day as they were to the days of Edward III. Through the medium of allegory, Langland was able to inject considerable bite into his satire. Many individuals and abuses felt the sting of his words. His writing was not intended for the

court (as was Chaucer's), but for the lower orders. It was they who were made to feel the corruptness and immorality of the monks, the greed and hypocrisy of those high up in Church and State. Langland is always the reformer, the voice of the common people, and as such he is supreme.

The thoroughness of Prof. Wells's approach is shown in his careful integration of the three texts. He has made use fundamentally of the B Text, with the improvements and additions of the later Text, and even preserves a few lines of the earliest 1362 A Text. But with the thoroughness of his scholarship, Prof. Wells combines the skill of a poet in his own right. His feeling for modern alliteration is remarkable, almost to a fault. Faithfulness to theme and to prosodic scheme seldom go hand in hand; but recent comparisons just carried on (with Skeats and Wright) convince us of the honesty of the former, and an example will suffice to convince of the felicity of the latter. It should perhaps go without saying that alliteration took the place of rhyme in the versification of the period. Each line was divided in the middle by a pause, with at least two strong beats falling upon important words in each half-line. Usually three syllables, and sometimes more, were linked by alliteration—two in the first half-line and one in the second. The first stanza serves to show how gracefully Prof. Wells has preserved this alliteration.

*In a summer season when the
sun was softest,*

Shrouded in a smock, in shepherd's clothing,

In the habit of a hermit of unholy living

I went through this world to witness wonders.

On a May morning on a Malvern hillside

I saw strange sights like scenes of Faerie.

I was weary of wandering and

*went to rest
By the bank of a brook in a
broad meadow.
As I lay and leaned and looked
on the water
I slumbered and slept, so sweet-
ly it murmured.*

The above example shows too how eminently readable Prof. Wells has made this work, which, even in other translations, still holds much obscurity. There are perhaps some who may feel that modernizing of Middle English is something close to sacrilege, yet even sacrilege were better than that Langland's work should go unread. And I cannot imagine even the severest critic saying anything but that the work of Prof. Wells is sympathetically and sincerely accomplished.

The book is handsomely and sturdily made, with copious notes by the translator and an explanatory introduction by Nevill Coghill.

The English language is superbly adapted to a delineation of heroic values. If such a statement were not already a truism, it would be aided in becoming such after a reading of Robin Lampson's novel in cadence, *Laughter Out of the Ground* (Charles Scribner's Sons. 344 pp. \$2.50), which, incidentally, makes comparisons with earlier epics of our tongue not too remote.

Mr. Lampson's work, done in what the author calls free hexameters, (though successfully avoiding the usually attendant monotony), owes considerable to Jeffers, but stems back to a much older root in our parent tongue. The cadence of Robin Lampson's heroes is the cadence of Shield of the Sheaf being given to the sea, and, like that glorious epic, it is doubtless designed to be read aloud. It is a rugged tale, done ruggedly, of the stuff which tells what a nation has been and suggests, still more, what it may become. In a work of such proportions—it fully achieves novel

length—Mr. Lampson has found it advisable to eschew "such classical devices as iambs, rhyme, and stanzas", employing instead "the natural cadences of English speech." This is put forth in a disarming author's note aimed very likely at those critics who have failed to emerge from their 19th century cocoon of Longfellow and Tennyson. Mr. Lampson announces a primary intention to hold the reader with



ROBIN LAMPSON

straightforward, unpretentious narrative.

This he does, admirably. The novel, of course, deals with one of the greatest chapters in our history—Marshall's discovery of gold at Sutter's Sawmill in the middle of the last century and the resultant frenzied rush to the gold fields. Among them is Samuel Gibson, who, having arrived in New York at the age of sixteen, to love and marry the beautiful Mildred Montgomery, is set free by her death in childbirth and turns to the west. His passage here via Panama is only one of the graphic sections of the book. Samuel's successes are smothered in disappointments, and he who had set

out so bravely a conqueror becomes an embittered man.

Three fortunes slip through his fingers. One season's findings is stolen, another time gold is discovered in a mine he has abandoned, and a third time, the hotel which he has taken over is gutted by flame. It is evident whatever happiness he may ultimately achieve, it is not to be through California's gold. The laughter the ground holds for Samuel Gibson is dark and mocking; and through bitterness he comes to know what Gilbert Porter, his comrade in adventure, has learned years earlier—that "the least man's happiness is far more important Than warehouses of goods and banks full of gold!"

The narrative is replete with historical incident, such as that of the young man, doubtless authenticated (to judge from the appended list of sources), who took eight bunches of green bananas on the voyage from Panama to San Francisco and, after all other food had moulded, sold them at one dollar a piece, arriving at his destination with nearly a thousand dollars; and that of the prospector found insane at his diggings, tugging frenziedly at a huge nugget he is unable to dislodge from its bed in the rocks. Mob justice and lynchings, the general lawlessness and uncontrolled fires which ravaged the settlements are vividly depicted.

Mr. Lampson's purpose—to write a realistic story of the Gold Rush, to present the Argonauts without glorification, with none of the usual nonsense about their altruistic motives and high unselfish purposes—has been well achieved. It is history without the dullness of the textbook, and poetry with the narrative interest of a novel. It constitutes one of the sagas for which Vachel Lindsay was always searching, at the base of his beloved America, and a story Bret Harte might have told in lines Whitman might have chanted:

I wish I could sing a lyric to unlimited

Faith, but I cannot to faith that is nurtured by avarice; for avarice

Is ever discordant and unheroic, and I am not stirred by the greedy

Faith that moves mountains because there is gold beneath them. I prefer

Men who lift up their eyes to the hills for something other than gold—

For the superhuman strength and re-creative beauty and the music of the mountains,

And in realization of the true relation of the human animal to the earth.

It is not out of place here to mention also Robin Lampson's *Terza-Rima Sonnets* (The Archetype Press. 53 pp. \$2.00, or signed \$3.00) probably the first collection of terza-rima sonnets to be published, although Mr. Lampson cites a number of cases where older poets have employed the identical rhyme scheme. The collection consists of twenty-one sonnets, all save one in the scheme aba, bcb, cdc, ded, ee. The ease with which the poet handles the form is evidenced in "Outraged Hands," here included, and also appearing in the Summer 1935 FANTASY.

It is only by exerting the utmost restraint that we can resist a trite comment about good gifts and small packages in commenting on the new poetry collection of Archibald MacLeish, *Public Speech* (Farrar & Rinehart. 38 pp. \$1.00), for, coming from a department that at all times finds it difficult to damn, we are at a loss for adequate superlatives for Mr. MacLeish's work.

He bears that quality of the true

poet, the feeling of new ideas uncovered with each reading. All unnecessary words are omitted, leaving as a result a clipped, telegraphic sort of melody, in which the imagery is sharp and hard, creating reality in a lightning flash.

With the first half dozen or so poems of *Public Speech*, Mr. MacLeish employs a theme new to him, the brotherhood of man, but he brings to it a technical proficiency few of his idealistic brethren possess. For the most part, his is not a militant proletarianism; there is much sound, quiet thought in it.

*The brotherhood is not by the
blood certainly:*

*But neither are men brothers by
speech—by saying so;*

*Men are brothers by life lived
and are hurt for it.*

Throughout most of this poet's work runs a futile, fatalistic strain of post-war disillusion. No other contemporary poet conveys so bitterly the tragedy of change, the irresistible march of time moving always into a timeless future that cannot hope to equal the momentary ecstasies of the past. The best that may be hoped for is "what time with all its timid gifts begrudges." Never pressed "time's winged chariot" so fiercely as on the back of Mr. MacLeish.

Thus it is the sea which serves, and serves often, as the perfect symbol of Mr. MacLeish's unhappy note. "The sound of the surf is the sound of forever", and later, "The one wave breaks along the brackish shore. Nothing returns . . ." The last two words are fraught with tremendous suggestion.

Here is the work of a Hemingway, concentrated and crystallized into tiny gems. And it marks for Mr. MacLeish the union of the hawk of proletarian poetry with the gull of the symbolic sea's futility. The hawk cannot but gain as a result, for the voice of the poet in this case is a clear, if sometimes tortured, cry.

Among the makers of the new poetry he has few equals.

This reader at least always approaches a new Jeffers with the fear that in a preceding work his ultimate has been reached, and that the book under consideration at present cannot hope to equal it. Certain it is that there is a quality of constantly increasing accomplishment in the Carmel writer. So it is again that while in *Solstice* (Random House, 151 pp. \$2.50) Robinson Jeffers goes off on a new tack in his first and lengthiest poem, there is no disappointment to the Jeffers following, but, instead, an awareness of a new facet of his genius.

This first poem, "At the Birth of an Age", almost wholly dramatic dialogue, is based on the closing episodes of the Nibelungen tragedy. It is in Mr. Jeffers' hands not only a narrative of considerable interest and power, but also serves as a vehicle for some pertinent analogies with our own age. Gudrun is intended "to express a characteristic quality of this culture-age"—self-contradiction and self-frustration. There is in this combination of history and myth a perfect theme for Mr. Jeffers' genius. Blood and dark tragedy, and a final, magnificent despair, while "the waves Of human dominion dwindle down their long twilight" where "pain rises like a red river: but also the heroic beauty of being."

However, it is in the title poem that we come across the poet of Point Sur. Here as in the other narratives blood and madness play a part. Madrone Bothwell, because she is a "woman of bad reputation", is to be deprived of her children by her husband and the courts. But Madrone objects and comes to the inevitable Jeffers victory, which is really no victory at all, but merely a form of escape.

Like all of Mr. Jeffers' women—

marvelous creations—Madrone is a woman of strength and fertility, free and proud, a true earth-woman. No prose has drawn so vivid a picture as the half-dozen lines describing Madrone washing her lacerated body after mortifying the flesh by rolling in burrs. Madrone, like Clare Walker, Hildis Ramsay, Fayne Fraser, Helen Thurso, and all the others of Mr. Jeffers' creation—even the names suggest immense vitality—is a superior woman, one of a race of goddesses cursed with mortal passions. They are the women so starkly visualized by Rockwell Kent, with the same feeling for ineffable loneliness and the same capacity for overpowering tragedy.

*She stood in the storm
as if they had carved and set
up an image of human despair*

In the shape of a western woman

*On the end of the world toward
the last ocean and all mankind
long extinct it stood there.*

Here beyond a doubt is the Jeffers we are accustomed to find—the maker of the finest figures of our time. What in modern poetry can surpass this:

*Where the tall Rockies pasture
with their heads down, white-spotted
and streaked like piebald horses, sharp withers*

*And thunder-scarred shoulders
against the sky, standing
with heads down, the snowmanes
blow in the wind;*

*But they will lift their heads
and whinny when the riders
come, they will stamp with
their hooves and shake down
the glaciers.*

There is something here in these lines which makes curiously unintelligent Malcolm Cowley's disparaging comment in a recent anthology.

James Weldon Johnson's poetic

voice, which first made itself heard in 1917 with the publication of *Fifty Years*, continues to hold a high position among Negro poets. Now, with *Saint Peter Relates an Incident* (The Viking Press. 105 pp. \$2.00), Mr. Johnson offers a careful winnowing of his previous work, using such well-known pieces as "Fifty Years" (written in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation) and "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (since adopted as the Negro National Hymn). Only the title poem has not heretofore been available to the general public, having been distributed privately to the poet's friends. It is a fitting and worthy accompanying piece to his other sermons.

The present selection shows as never before the three divisions into which Mr. Johnson's poetic work falls. The first, and least important, is the traditional dialect verse, first made popular by Paul Laurence Dunbar, a type of verse which that latter poet once referred to as "a jingle in a broken tongue". The second is an array of poems of miscellaneous forms and themes, exclusive of those which make up the third and most important division of his work. This third group is that in which, sings Mr. Johnson:

*. . . injustice, brutishness, and
wrong*

*Stir me to make a weapon of my
song.*

It is under this group that the tragic "The Black Mammy" falls, and that fine apostrophe, "O Black and Unknown Bards."

It is quite true that Dunbar's verse, whatever its charm and historical importance as the first faithful rendition of Negro life, did little more than sentimentalize the Negro's position. Only occasionally did he break through a type of verse successfully imitated by whites to a burning awareness of his race, and its often tragic implications.

This, it seems to me, is what James Weldon Johnson has done to a superlative degree. He has deeply felt the sorrow and oppression of his people, applied to his rich heritage a richer intelligence, and feelingly expressed it for all peoples.

In a late issue we were delighted to comment upon—and, incidentally, publish—something of the poetic work of J. Redwood Anderson. Now, continuing in the same brilliant tradition of achievement, comes another book from the same poet, *English Fantasies* (Oxford University Press. 90 pp. \$2.25), a book of tranquil sincerity and gentle Celtic melancholy.

The present collection is composed of two moderately long pieces and a group of ten shorter ones, the latter grouped under the title, "Standing Waters". Mr. Anderson might have been describing his own peculiar poetic genius when he says in "The Drinking Pool"—"it is one of those whose beauty lies neither in joy nor passion." The ten "standing waters"—expressed with that reverent love for nature which is a special attribute of the Englishman—assume a definite personality. Thus "Puddles" are the "casual children of the storm", playing "like ragged urchins in the public road":

*Even the Earth, their mother,
holds them cheap:
she feeds them not—for them
no welling fount
of waters from her bosom
flows; they wait
on the chance mercies of the
passing showers.*

While "The Lake in the Park" is
*tamed water: not even the
stiffest breeze
stirs it or wakens on its surface
more
than a street-corner chatter of
revolution.*

"Catherine" is a beautiful ode to an unknown individual, whose name the poet finds "in the north-east corner" of a second-hand copy of Dante in the original Tuscan. From this simple knowledge of a name and an interest, Mr. Anderson conjectures at a life, although running along with it, the poem is, in effect, a paean to Dante, with occasional literary bypaths to Shelley, Arnold, and others.

In "Catherine", as in the other pieces, Mr. Anderson shows himself possessed of a rare poetic gift, a gift which runs to the traditional. He does not feel a kinship with many of the other younger English and American poets; his feelings are given to consorting with the rarefied atmosphere of a Keats. There is much of a "strange sweetness, the sorrow without cause" in the lyrics of this softly-singing English poet.

Samuel Loveman is a literary figure in some ways as strange as his famous friend, Ambrose Bierce. Possessed of a name known to all poets and the author of first-rate poetry, he is unfortunately seldom published and consequently far too little known by the masses.

Thus it is with genuine pleasure that we find a collection of his poetry, *The Hermaphrodite and Other Poems* (The Caxton Printers, Ltd. 130 pp. \$2.00), now appearing in a book beautifully designed and printed, and with a title page that is perfection itself.

The title poem, covering about a quarter of the book, appeared sometime ago in a private printing, thereby limiting itself to a very select group. Now with a larger printing and general distribution, it can rightfully take its place as one of our country's literary landmarks.

Samuel Loveman, writer in an age of iron and steel, has turned his back squarely upon it and retired to ancient Greece for his inspiration.

No one writing today has so completely made the ancient world his own, or so sympathetically interpreted its glory. "I, haunted by a pagan world grown old", appearing in one of the briefer lyrics, is the keynote of his talent. His work is whitely beautiful, chaste in style, and with the precision of cut-glass—yet, paradoxically, having the warmth of nightingales and ivy, vine-leaves, and "lips half-drunken with . . . wine."

There is much that Oscar Wilde would have appreciated in Mr. Love-man's work. Let the laurel, so long withheld, now be his.

From the writings of Frederick E. Keller, Carolyn Ann Cross has collected close to fifty poems under the title, *Homemakers' Poems* (Dorrance & Company, Inc. 72 pp. \$1.00). These selections were presumably read over daily broadcasts of the WIP Homemakers' Club, of which organization Miss Cross is director. The poems are inspirational and homey

I Have Been a Pilgrim (Henry Harrison. 96 pp. \$1.50) is Jamie Sexton Holme's third published book of lyrics. Mrs. Holme writes on a variety of subjects with a somewhat disillusioned pen. Her work exhibits a pleasant, singing talent that will appeal to many.

The poetic work of Kathleen Sutton and Joseph Joel Keith requires little comment in these pages, and it goes without saying that a union of their talents is the felicitous sum of their separate melodic gifts. *Through Many Doors* (The Paebur Company. 86 pp. \$2.00), their joint work, covers in over three-score poems written alternately by Miss Sutton and Mr. Keith the emo-

tions and experiences of a universal love. Both poets are essentially lyricists, with the happy faculty of having their songs sing. The obscurantism of some modern verse is not theirs.

It is worthy of note that the col-



JOSEPH JOEL KEITH
KATHLEEN SUTTON

laboration glorifies the married state, usually neglected in the poetry of love, thus it may be expected that the poetry shows more of devotion than burning passion. Either read as a whole, or as individual poems, the work promises many pleasures.

There is in Peter Neagoe the ability to bring to life the peasant as none other in modern letters has succeeded in accomplishing. This we have always known, but in his present work, *There Is My Heart* (Coward-McCann, Inc. 373 pp. \$2.50), he has achieved the ultimate in transporting his reader to another manner of life. A love story of exquisite tenderness and beauty is here set against the same gay and vivid peasant background, finding culmination in a tragedy as overwhelming as Hemingway's supreme achievement.

But were there no story whatever, *There Is My Heart* would deserve recognition as one of the most brilliant panoramic views of a country and its people. Picturesque scenes are crowded in a riot of elemental coloring. Christmas and Easter celebrations are participated in by the reader, fairs and bridal ceremonies attended. One somehow smells the fragrance of the wheat and even feels the spears; there is in it the unmistakable scent of marjoram and the taste of plum brandy, the tinkling of sleigh bells and the reverberation of the funeral gong.

The story concerns John Codreanu, who sets out from his Roumanian mountain home with the intention of taking passage to America, but he finds the gay and generous Roumanian people glad to see him come and reluctant to let him go. He comes to rest temporarily at the home of the great-hearted Anghel and his beautiful wife, Zamphira, a Selisteanca (which means she is from Seliste, whence, says Mr. Neagoe, come the most beautiful women in all the world). The couple urge John to stay on with them, and he comes to love his host's wife, making more impossible than ever his departure. Anghel has but one sorrow, the knowledge of his own sterility, and his love and admiration for John lead him to the suggestion that Zamphira have a

child by him. It is this suggestion, made first to Zamphira and then to John, that defeats its own self-negating purpose. Around these three move the other characters, all sharply realized: Saveta, Zamphira's younger sister, and her love for John; Osip, the boisterous and good-



PETER NEAGOE

natured Russian icon-maker; the few heckling intellectuals of the town, and their unacknowledged leader, Starevitch, whose endorsement of Anghel's idea bears such bitter fruit.

Mr. Neagoe employs here a situation that might be considered highly indelicate, but in his hand it never loses a curious idyllic quality. The fragments of dialogue in which Anghel propounds his idea to his wife and then to John, with subsequent passages, are masterpieces of delicacy and restraint. Zamphira remains the loyal wife and John the loyal friend, while Anghel, loving both of them, realizes too late that he has turned himself under in the field of his own plowing.

We will never understand what it is in the writers' craft that succeeds

where mere wordiness itself does not; what it is, for instance, in Mr. Neagoe's writing, that makes us feel the tinkling and the tolling of the bells. It is a gift intangible. There is something elemental, something barrenly beautiful about his prose. It is the type of beauty only a tremendous love can evoke, and this Mr. Neagoe obviously feels for his people and his country. Truly, there is his heart.

Taking her title from a slave song, Minnie Hite Moody has written, in *Death Is a Little Man* (Julian Messner, Inc. 274 pp. \$2.50) a simple, friendly story of the Southern Negro, and written it sincerely, with no trace of the depravity, the sensationalism, the mumbo-jumbo that is being put into much fiction of the South. It is undoubtedly an accurate story. Mrs. Moody has not spent years in Atlanta for nothing; her observation is much too keen to permit any misperceptions.

In the city of Atlanta, in the section known as the Bottom, eight drab cabins are huddled "like dregs in the bottom of a cup." Here Eenie comes to live with her good-for-nothing husband, Weaver. It cannot be said the people back home hadn't warned her—"Ever a gal up an marries a stranger," her mother had said, "hit all de same wid buyin wif de eyes shet. She ain never know whut she gittin. Maybe huh bed gwine be shucks, maybe down; hit all de same—she doan know." In Eenie's case, it was mostly shucks. They had not been married long before Weaver got into a brawl over a girl and, believing he has killed his opponent, he flees to the city with Eenie. There he begins pleasuring himself again, "cutting his eyes after" a new girl. There is another fight, and Weaver gets five years on the gang—"Better for true to lose a man to the gang

than ever to another woman", thinks Eenie. But he is not lost for long; Weaver soon appears again and there are more casual matings and subsequent peregrinations.

The story is, of course, Eenie's, Weaver's doings only important as they affect her. The book presents several incidental stories, such as that of Pretty, Eenie's sister, who comes to live next door. Here, too, enter in the church ceremonies and the many birthings and deaths in the relationship and the community. Indeed, there are so many deaths,—Pappy, Big Young, Pearlie, Dallas, Soot, Pansy, and others—that the book would be an unbelievable mortuary, were it not for the basic optimism of the Negro character, which has developed tragedy-surmounting traits through years of suffering. But someone is always being "kotch'd", in spite of "Miz Tithers' losin-brew", and there is a birthing to compensate for every death — Cherry, Flimsie, Ogle, Piney, I-ona (the latter named after the cans in the chain store). The attendant superstitions and practices make fascinating reading.

In her present book Mrs. Moody has taken a tremendous stride since *Once Again in Chicago*, of not long ago. Interesting as that book was from a narrative standpoint, its interest hung entirely upon a single episode of coincidence. The present, however, shows its author conversant with an entire racial philosophy. Mrs. Moody knows well the simple Negro ambition for a 'hogany table, "a house wid lectricity and fau-cets", the sudden passions, the exuberant joys, the generosity and deep-seated religion of the colored soul. Consequently, her people are very much alive, and move as easily through the pages of her novel as life itself. It is an important picture prepared for us, one as important in its way as *Scarlet Sister Mary* or *Porgy*.

With the release of *Ulysses* in 1933, Comstockery was well on its way to banishment from our courts. Thus the unpleasant publicity that brought about avid and furtive readings of *The Well of Loneliness* will not succeed in damning a new book dealing with love's borderline. This does not imply that the covers of Murrell Edmunds' *Sojourn Among Shadows* (The Caxton Printers, Ltd. 144 pp. \$2.00) conceal a pornographic and sensational text. Mr. Edmunds for the most part delicately skirts his theme. His story is more suggested than related, sometimes with almost too much restraint.

The hypocrisy of his father, "a shouting, weeping, hysterical apostle of sin and damnation", and the death of his mother cause a seventeen-year-old youth to take to the road in the custody of his uncle. He is left temporarily at the home of an aged couple, whose only companion is their grandson, David. It does not take long to learn that there is a union between David and the uncle, though our seventeen-year-old narrator does not entirely understand the nature of it. Uncle Tom's subsequent sacrifice is tragically and effectively worked out.

The keynote of the book is in the lines: "men are all cowards, and if by any chance some of them are not like the others, they pounce upon them and jeer at them and humiliate them until they become ashamed." This would appear to indicate, however, a sympathy that the author does not always feel. He is

himself sometimes likely to look on his subjects as monstrosities. Homosexuality is abnormal, beyond a doubt, but it is an abnormality with a very real foundation; and if it is condemned, it should be condemned not for itself but for the circumstances which gave rise to it. Thus, we do not find in Mr. Edmunds' book quite the understanding of *We Too Are Drifting* or, better still, that finest work on this theme, *Revelation*, translated some five years ago from the French of Andre Birabeau.

But Mr. Edmunds has his own peculiar achievement. He has taken a theme which lends itself easily to a Bohemian handling—and has in most cases been given such—and thrown it against a background of normality. The immaturity and only awakening understanding of the boy narrator is intelligently executed. His normal repugnance is true to character (for a lad of seventeen), and in the vague inner workings of this lad's mind, Mr. Edmunds shows considerable insight.

There is much good to be done by Mr. Edmunds' book, and others like it, in making understandable at least one aspect of sexual life. As Havelock Ellis says: "The relation of certain people, who while different from their fellow human beings, are sometimes of the highest character and the finest aptitudes—to the often hostile society in which they move, presents difficult and still unsolved problems." It is at this hostile society that these texts should be directed.

